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HC strikes down amended IT Rules on fake news

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

The Bombay High Court on Friday held as unconstitutional and struck down the amended Information Technology (IT) Rules which sought to identify fake and false content on social media regarding the government.

Being "vague and overbroad", the amended provision could have a "chilling effect" not only on an individual but also social media intermediaries or platforms, it held.

The landmark ruling was passed by Justice AS Chandurkar who served as a `tie-breaker judge' after a division (two-member) bench in January 2024 delivered a split verdict.

The amended rules violated several constitutional provisions, including Article 14 (right to equality), Article 19 (freedom of speech and expression) and Article 19(1)(g) (freedom to practice any profession), the third judge held.

Rule 3(1)(b)(5) -- the controversial provision dealing with the establishment of a Fact Checking Unit (FCU) -- was ultra vires to the Constitution, he added.

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra, Editors Guild of India,

The landmark ruling was passed by Justice AS Chandurkar who served as a 'tie-breaker judge' ***PHOTO: PTI***

News Broadcast and Digital Association, and Association of Indian Magazines had filed petitions before the Bombay High Court challenging the new regulations.

Central to the controversy was the establishment of a Fact Checking Unit with powers to flag misleading or false online content concerning the government.

- Being "vague and overbroad", the amended provision could have a "chilling effect" not only on an individual but also social media intermediaries or platforms, it held.

"Under the right to freedom of speech and expression, there is no further "right to the truth", nor is it the responsibility of the State to ensure that the citizens are entitled only to "information" that is not fake or false or misleading as identified by the FCU," the COURT said.

The judge further said there was no rationale for undertaking the exercise of determining whether any information in relation to the business of the Central government is either fake or false or misleading when in digital form, but not doing the same when such information is in the print form.

He also found the term "fake, false and misleading" problematic. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Congress hates Ganesha, put idol in police van: PM

WARDHA, 20 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the "ghost of hatred" has entered Congress and said further targeting the main Opposition party, Modi maintained the 138-year-old outfit has come to hate even Ganesha puja, remarks coming days after he offered prayers to Lord Ganesha's idol at Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud's New Delhi home, drawing criticism from political opponents. "I went to a Ganesha puja programme and Congress criticised it for appeasement politics. Ganesha was put behind bars in Karnataka (ruled by Congress). A Ganesha idol was put in a police van," he pointed out. Modi noted Congress allies, which include the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP), kept mum and did not take a stand on Ganesha Bappa's insult. *—PTI*

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Ahead of election, Sri Lanka hopes for a change

COLOMBO, 20 SEPT

Two years ago, tens of thousands of Sri Lankans rose up against their president and forced him to flee the country. As the country prepares for its first election since then, many say they're still waiting for change. As Sri Lanka sank into economic collapse in 2022, people from various walks of life rallied to change a long-entrenched government they saw as responsible. The unprecedented island-wide public uprising they led was a moment of hope for the country long been fatigued by war and economic instability. Days ahead of Saturday's presidential election, many still complain of corrupt leaders, economic mismanagement, and the entrenched power of the political old guard, but former protesters are having a hard time coming together behind a candidate. *—PTI*

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Unsafe food causes 4,20,000 deaths annually: WHO

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday highlighted the critical role of food regulators in combating unsafe food, which causes 600 million cases of foodborne diseases and 4,20,000 deaths annually. In a video message to the second Global Food Regulators Summit in Delhi, Ghebreyesus said, "Our food systems are facing increasing challenges due to climate change, population growth, new technologies, globalisation and industrialisation." He revealed that 70 per cent of fatalities from unsafe food occur among children under five. "The food regulator community has a critical role to play in addressing these global challenges," the WHO Chief said, emphasising the need for coordinated efforts as over 3 million people cannot afford a nutritious diet. Ghebreyesus stressed that collaboration is essential to ensure safe and accessible food for all, as food systems cross borders and continents. *—PTI*

Tirupati Temple trust backs 'animal fat' in laddus claim

Centre orders probe, plea in SC alleges 'Hindu' feelings hurt

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

As the Tirupati laddu row snowballed into a major national controversy, the temple body managing the super-rich shrine on Friday revealed it has come across sub-standard ghee and presence of lard in samples tested for quality, echoing claims made by Andhra Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu two days ago.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple, asserted there was presence of 'Lard' (pig fat) and other impurities in the ghee, citing a lab report.

The issue reached the Supreme Court too on Friday. A lawyer filed a petition alleging that the act violates fundamental Hindu religious customs. The plea added that it deeply hurts the sentiments of countless devotees who consider the 'prasad' a sacred blessing.

TTD Executive Officer J Shyamala Rao said the board was in the process of blacklisting the contractor who supplied 'adulterated' ghee ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Centre too weighed in, with Union Health Minister JP Nadda seeking a report on the matter from Andhra Pradesh government and promising suitable action after examining it.

Food Minister Pralhad Joshi called for an investigation into the allegations.

TTD Executive Officer J Shyamala Rao said the board was in the process of blacklisting the contractor who supplied 'adulterated' ghee. He claimed that the suppliers took advantage of a lack of in-house testing facility.

During an NDA legislative party meeting on Wednesday, Naidu, chief of the ruling TDP, claimed that the previous YSRCP government did not even spare Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple and used substandard ingredients and animal fat for making laddus.

Former chief minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy described the matter as "diversion politics," and slammed it as a "concocted story". Reddy said the adulteration issue was taken up to divert the public attention from the state government's 100 days of rule. Addressing a press conference, he said Naidu is using God for political gains.

"Is it fair to play with the sentiments of crores of devotees across the world," Reddy asked Naidu. All samples, tests and results mentioned in lab test reports as evidence occurred under the NDA government, he asserted. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2 and 3

CONG LEADERS MEET CM

Out on bail, BJP MLA Munirathna arrested for rape

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

BJP MLA Munirathna was arrested on Friday in connection with a case of rape, sexual harassment and criminal intimidation registered against him. Along with him, six others have been booked in the case following the complaint of a 40-year-old woman who alleged that the incident took place at a private resort in Kaggalipura police station's jurisdiction, police said.

The Kaggalipura police took the MLA into custody minutes after he came out of Parappana Agrahara Central Prison.

Meanwhile, Vokkaliga Congress leaders met on Thursday night and demanded the Chief Minister to constitute a SIT to probe 10 cases against MLA Munirathna. Earlier this week, a delegation of Congress ministers hailing from the Vokkaliga community led by ministers N Cheluvarayaswamy met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and urged for stern action against the BJP MLA who has been arrested on charges including using casteist slurs on a former corporator. "The situation is such that not only our Vokkaligas but the entire society as such should boycott him. Contractor Cheluvaraju, who is one of the complainants, released an audio recording of a call between him and Munirathna, in which the MLA made derogatory comments about Vokkaligas and Dalits. *—Salar News*

MLA Munirathna ***PHOTO: PTI***

>>>More on Page 2

30 held for clashes during Ganesha in Davangere

DAVANGERE, 20 SEPT

Thirty people were arrested in the incident of stone pelting during a Ganesha idol immersion procession in this district headquarters town in which two constables were injured, police said on Friday.

According to police, the procession was proceeding smoothly and the trouble started when it was passing near Chamarajpete Circle last evening.

Hindu youths raised slogans in favour of Lord Ram and group of youth raised slogans in favour of Islam and this led to a verbal clash between the two groups. Meanwhile, some miscreants hurled stones at the procession.

"Immediately we took control of the situation and the Ganesha idol was immersed peacefully.

Adequate security forces were deployed and the situation was completely brought under control," Davangere Superintendent of Police Uma Prashanth told PTI. Five cases were registered in the incident and 30 people arrested, she said. *—PTI*

Littérateur Hampa to open Mysuru Dasara

MYSURU, 20 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced on Friday that renowned Kannada litterateur Hampa Nagarajaiah will inaugurate this year's Naada Habba Dasara celebrations on 3 October atop Chamundi Hill. The festivities will continue until 12 October.

Speaking at Mandakalli Airport, Siddaramaiah mentioned that the Dasara committee had entrusted him with selecting the inauguration guest. An official invitation will soon be extended to Nagarajaiah. In a separate event, the Chief Minister called on residents of Karnataka to promote and use the Kannada language, emphasizing its status as the official administrative language. He encouraged people from other states living in Karnataka to learn and speak Kannada as part of fostering cultural integration. *—Salar News*

Gehlot writes to govt over leak of 'confidential letter'

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Another letter written by Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to the Chief Secretary, expressing "perplexity", as to how the government came to know about the "confidential material" relating to Lokayukta's request to him seeking prosecution or investigation sanction against some opposition leaders, surfaced on Friday.

In the letter to Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, the Governor also pointed out that in 22 August Cabinet decision there is only observation with regard to pendency in according sanction in four cases, and there was no "advice" to him, as reported in the media. The Karnataka Cabinet has decided to give "aid and advice" to the Governor to act on requests seeking sanction for prosecution against JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy and three former BJP ministers including mining baron G Janardhan Reddy, the government had said on 22 August. *—PTI*

Sensex soars 1,359 pts to settle above historic 84K

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

Benchmark Sensex closed above the historic 84,000-mark for first time while Nifty settled at a new record high on Friday, powered by a rally in frontline bank stocks along with upbeat trends in the US and Asian markets. Equity investors became richer by Rs 6.24 lakh crore

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,359.51 points or 1.63 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 84,544.31. During the day, it soared 1,509.66 points or 1.81 per cent to hit the momentous intra-day peak of 84,694.46.

The NSE Nifty surged 375.15 points or 1.48 per cent to close at a record 25,790.95 level. During the day, the gauge zoomed 433.45 points or 1.70 per cent to reach an all-time intra-day peak of 25,849.25.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra jumped over 5 per cent. JSW Steel, ICICI Bank, Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel, Nestle, Adani

PHOTO: PTI

Ports, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Tech Mahindra, Maruti, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Steel were the other big gainers.

State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and Bajaj Finance were the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green. Equity markets in Europe were quoting lower. The US markets ended remarkably higher on Thursday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,547.53 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. *—PTI*

TAKES SUO MOTU COGNISANCE

SC flays K'taka HC judge for Pak remark

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

A five-judge Supreme Court bench Friday took suo motu cognisance of a Karnataka High Court judge's alleged controversial and objectionable comments against a woman lawyer during the court proceedings in a case and his reference to a Muslim-majority area in Bengaluru as "Pakistan" in another.

Before the commencement of the day's proceedings in the apex court, the five senior-most judges -- Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice BR Gavai, Justice Surya Kant and Justice Hrishikesh Roy -- assembled to take a judicial note of the comments made by Justice Vedavyasachar Srishananda of the Karnataka High Court.

In video clips, the judge told the woman lawyer that she seemed to know a lot about the "opposition party" and adding

Supreme Court and Justice Vedavyasachar Srishananda ***PHOTO: PTI***

that she might even know "the colour of their undergarments". The judge, in another case related to landlord-tenant dispute, referred to a Muslim-dominated locality in Bengaluru as "Pakistan".

Taking suo motu (on its own) cognisance of the reported observations, the bench, at the outset, said,

"At this stage, we request the Registrar General of the High Court of Karnataka to submit a report to this court after seeking administrative directions of the Chief Justice of the High Court of Karnataka, in regard to the subject matter which has been referred to above," the order said.

This exercise may be carried out in the next two days and a report be submitted to the Secretary General of the apex court in the meantime, CJI said and listed the suo motu case on 25 September at 10.30 am. During a brief hearing, the bench said there was a need to establish clear guidelines for constitutional court judges regarding their remarks in court. *—PTI*

SC'S YOUTUBE HACKED, CRYPTO VIDEO STREAMED

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The Supreme Court's YouTube channel was hacked on Friday and showing videos promoting a cryptocurrency developed by US-based company Ripple Labs.

A blank video with the title "Brad Garlinghouse: Ripple Responds To The SEC's $2 Billion Fine! XRP PRICE PREDICTION" is currently live on the hacked channel. The apex court has been using YouTube to stream live hearings of cases listed before constitution benches and matters involving public interest. *—PTI*

State instructs temples to use only Nandini ghee

Amid Tirupati Laddu row, temples told to ensure quality in prasada

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

With Tirupati Laddu row snowballing into a major controversy, Karnataka government on Friday issued a circular instructing all temples coming under the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department, to maintain quality in 'prasada' prepared there.

The temples have also been asked to only use the Nandini brand ghee of the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) at the temples.

"It is hereby instructed that at all notified temples that come under the Karnataka State Religious Endowment Department to only use Nandini ghee compulsorily for 'sevas' (services), lamps, preparation of all kinds of prasadas, and at 'Dasoha Bhavans' (where food is served)," the circular said.

It said, "It is instructed to maintain quality in prasada at the temples."

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages the super-rich Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple, on Friday revealed it has come across sub-standard ghee and presence of lard in samples tested for quality ***PHOTOS: PTI***

Test prasada at temples in State: Union Minister

Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Pralhad Joshi has urged the Karnataka government to test the 'prasada' (offering) of all sacred temples in the State.

He suggested that, following the controversy, it is important for the Karnataka government to test the 'prasada' at all sacred sites to ensure its purity.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, which manages the super-rich Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple on Friday revealed it has come across sub-standard ghee and presence of lard in samples tested for quality,

—PTI

COMMUNAL CLASH

Siddaramaiah blames BJP for violence at Nagamangala

MYSURU, 20 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday sought to blame BJP for the recent communal violence at Nagamangala in Mandya.

He also said that on getting to know about "police failure" in the 11 September Nagamangala incident, the Deputy Superintendent of Police has been suspended.

"Do you know how many Ganesha (pandals) were there? Out of 60,000 Ganeshas, incidents have happened in (only) two places -- Nagamangala and Davangere," he told reporters when asked about incidents of violence during Ganesh idol procession and immersions in the state.

"In Davangere, only stone pelting has happened; in Nagamangala shops and vehicles were torched," Siddaramaiah said. "It is because of BJP's instigation, such things happen," he said.

Siddaramaiah said he will check as to what caused the delay in Lokayukta's probe against former Chief Ministers BS Yediyurappa and HD Kumaraswamy in the alleged denotification of land in Bengaluru.

Siddaramaiah ***PHOTO: PTI***

Congress in Karnataka had on Thursday asked the Lokayukta to expedite its probe against Yediyurappa and Kumaraswamy in connection with the denotification of 1.11 acres of land at Gangenahalli in Kasaba hobli of Bengaluru North.

Hampa Nagarajaiah to open Mysuru Dasara

He also announced that noted literary figure Hampa Nagarajaiah has been chosen to inaugurate the Mysuru Dasara festivities this year.

Dasara festival will be held from 3 to 12 October.

—Salar News with Agencies

PROBATIONARY POSTS' RE-EXAM WILL BE HELD: CM

MYSURU, 20 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said he has instructed the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) to arrange a re-examination of gazetted probationary posts as soon as possible.

There had been an outrage over the poor translation of questions from English to Kannada, leading to confusion among Kannada-medium students, in the examination.

The preliminary exams for filling posts of 350 Gazetted Probationary officers was held on 27 August.

Talking about the demand to raise the age limit for constable posts from 27 to 33 years, he said he has informed Home Minister G Parameshwara to take a one-time decision on this.

—ANI

EX-MIN UNDER LENS

Cong demands SIT probe against Jnanendra over 'scams, land deals'

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Congress has called for a probe by Special Investigation Team (SIT) into scams and illegal land dealings that allegedly happened during the tenure of former home minister Araga Jnanendra.

Speaking at a press conference held at the KPCC office on Queens Road here on Friday, former minister Kimmane Ratnakar raised concerns about the lack of investigation into Jnanendra's role in Police Sub-Inspector recruitment scam and bitcoin scandal. During Jnanendra's tenure from 2021 to 2023, several irregularities occurred at Tirthahalli in Shivamogga, including poor road construction works, Ratnakar alleged. Jnanendra's accomplices, including Santro Ravi, were involved in these activities but were never questioned during the investigation, the Congress leader said.

Araga Jnanendra ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

Ratnakar accused Jnanendra of purchasing government and monastery land through benami transactions, questioning the source of funds used for these purchases. Additionally, he pointed to a suspicious death near Jnanendra's residence, involving a monkey attack, where no police action was taken for eight days. Ratnakar claimed that Jnanendra's relatives might be linked to the case.

KPCC Media Division President Ramesh Babu alleged that Jnanendra's son was involved in land encroachments, and criticised the poor construction quality of buildings inaugurated under Jnanendra's supervision as part of the Rural Development Department's projects.

—Salar News

ISRO Chief: Don't want another Boeing incident with Gaganyaan

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Although Gaganyaan is ready for launch by the end of the year, we should proceed with caution, said Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman S Somanath on Friday.

Gaganyaan, which is among the projects approved by the Union cabinet on Wednesday, is India's first human mission.

"I don't want what happened to the Boeing Starliner, so we should be very careful," added Somanath.

The first test flight of Boeing Starliner spacecraft with astronauts, launched by NASA on 5 June returned to Earth on 7 September, but without the astronauts. Astronauts Sunitha Williams and Butch Wilmore were forced to extend their eight-day stay in the International Space to eight months.

Somanath also stressed the importance of exploring Venus.

The Venus Orbiter Mission (VOM) is also among the four projects approved by the Union cabinet and it has been allocated Rs 1,236 crore.

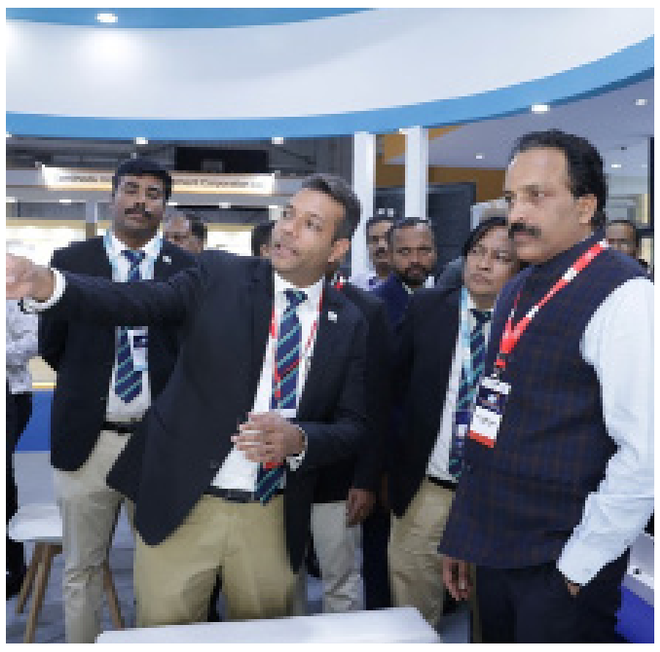
"Tomorrow Earth may become inhabitable due to some reasons. So if you do not study what is happening in Mars and Venus, possibly our future generation will be affected. Venus is also important because India has successfully gone to Mars and Moon," said Somanath.

As it will take seven years to develop the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), the launch vehicle being built by ISRO to replace currently operational systems, since the Venus mission is expected to be launched in March 2028, it will be launched from the existing vehicles, said Somanath.

"Russia,China and Japan are also sending missions to Venus by 2030. So, by 2028, we have decided to launch our Venus mission from Launch Vehicle Mark-3 or LVM3," he added.

Venus mission will be India's second interplanetary mission after the Mars Orbiter Mission that was launched on November 5, 2013, and entered the Martian orbit on 24 September, 2014.

—PTI



ISRO Chairman S Somanath visits Bengaluru Space Expo on Friday ***PHOTO: X/BSXINDIA***

- The first test flight of Boeing Starliner spacecraft with astronauts, launched by NASA on 5 June, returned to Earth on 7 September, but without the astronauts Sunitha Williams and Butch Wilmore

ISRO, IN-SPACe & NSIL sign tech transfer deals

Indian Science Research Organisation (ISRO), Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) and NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) signed five Technology Transfer Agreements (TTA) with non-governmental Entities on Friday.According to a press statement issued by IN-SPACe, with the five TTAs signed, the total number of agreements signed post space reforms stands at 75. The companies that signed the TTAs today were Anabond Ltd, Salvo Industries Pvt Ltd, Micropack Pvt Ltd, and Astra Microwave Products Ltd, stated the release. The TTAs aim to give private players the opportunity to access the developed technologies available with ISRO, enabling them to use space-related technology for commercial applications in space as well as other sectors such as agriculture, and cybersecurity. *—PTI*

HDK flays Cong over denotification claim

MYSURU, 20 SEPT

JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Friday hit out at the ruling Congress for levelling allegations against him in a land denotification in Bengaluru, and claimed that he had no role in it.

He also claimed that the investigations into the case have found no illegality but, aimed at targeting him, the case has been "kept open."

Congress on Thursday asked the Lokayukta to expedite its probe against former Chief Ministers BS Yediyurappa and Kumaraswamy in the alleged denotification of land here.

HD Kumaraswamy ***PHOTO: PTI***

Ministers Krishna Byre Gowda, Dinesh Gundu Rao and Santhosh Lad had held a joint press conference and released documents regarding the denotification of 1.11 acres of land at Gangenahalli in Kasaba hobli of Bengaluru North.

Kumaraswamy said in 2015 Siddaramaiah, "through" a person named Jaya Kumar Patil, had filed a case against him in this cases in which Yediyurappa is accused number 1 (A1) and he is accused number 2 (A2).

"For the last three months they have been struggling to do something (against me)..... in 2015 this case was filed with Lokayukta. TIll 2018 Siddaramaiah was the Chief Minister, what was he doing without getting investigated?" he said.

—PTI

2 forest officials convert forest land, booked

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre has ordered the reclaiming of 22.08 acres of forest land at Kottanur village, KR Pura Hobli, in Bengaluru. Of the 22.08 acres of forest land, 17.34 acres (valued at over Rs 500 crore) was illegally mutated and converted into revenue land by Assistant Commissioner MG Shivanna (a KAS officer) and Tahsildar Ajit Kumar Rai. The government had notified that 17.34 acres with survey number 48 has violated a Supreme Court order that prohibits granting forest land for non-forestry purposes without approval from the court, Khadre said. The two officers have been booked under Forest Conservation Act, 1980, the minister said. Since 2023, the government has been trying to reclaim forest lands illegally mutated by these two officers, the Forest Minister said.Of the 22.08 acres converted into revenue land, only 13 acres have been transferred back to the Forest Department as recorded in the court (RTC) on 25 January, 2000. Khandre instructed authorities to map the remaining 9 acres, which is valued at Rs 700 crore, and initiate the process under Section 64(A) of Forest Conservation Act, 1980, to reclaim it.

—Salar News

FRESH SALVO

'Munirathna wants to infect enemies with HIV'

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Former MP DK Suresh has accused BJP MLA Munirathna of leading a conspiracy to infect his political opponents with HIV virus.

State government should launch an investigation into Munirathna's actions and those allegedly involved in the network, Suresh said here on Friday.

Suresh claimed that Munirathna had made derogatory statements targeting Vokkaligas, Dalits, and women, and his actions were politically shielded by leaders from BJP and JD(S).

Suresh criticised the silence of BJP-JD(S) leaders such as CT Ravi, HD Kumaraswamy and R Ashok, suggesting they may be covertly supporting Munirathna. He also called for community leaders and religious seers to take a stand against Munirathna's remarks and actions, warning that failure to do so could set a dangerous precedent.

About Kumaraswamy's comments on Gangenahalli denotification case, Suresh dismissed them, accusing Kumaraswamy of misleading the public to protect his personal interests.

—Salar News

Youth Congress members protest against BJP MLA Muniratna, in Bengaluru on Friday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

BJP MLA MUNIRATNA: NO STRANGER TO CONTROVERSIES

- **2010: BBMP Wall Collapse:** On 1 June, a wall of a BBMP building in central Bengaluru collapsed, resulting in the death of 17-year-old college student Sanjana Singh. Munirathna, who was a civil contractor and corporator, was booked.
- **2014: Fake Bill Scam:** The film producer and contractor-turned-politician was implicated in a fake bill scam involving around Rs 1,500 crore in the civic works undertaken by BBMP in Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Malleshwaram and Gandhinagar Assembly constituencies. In 2018, CID charged Munirathna in the scam.
- **2018: Voter ID Card Seizure:** Around 9,800 fake voter IDs were found in an apartment linked to Manirathna in Jalahalli, just days before Assembly elections. Munirathna was with Congress then and polls to Rajarajeshwari Nagar was postponed.
- **2022: Contractors' Case:** In December, Karnataka State Contractors' Association President D Kempanna along with four others was arrested in connection with a Rs 50 crore defamation lawsuit filed by Munirathna. Kempanna had spoken about corruption without naming him.
- **2023: Hate Speech:** In April, Munirathna, who switched from Congress to BJP, was booked for allegedly using inflammatory language targeting Christians during his election campaign.
- **2023: Honey Trapping:** In the same month, Munirathna was accused by Velu Naikar, a former Congress corporator, of honey trapping politicians to manipulate election outcomes. Naikar alleged that former minister Munirathna operated a studio, where politicians were recorded and later blackmailed. Munirathna dismissed these claims.
- **2023: Uri Gowda and Nanje Gowda Film Controversy:** Manirathna, who has produced a couple of films, announced a movie on Urigowda-Nanjegowda, who are said to have killed Tipu Sultan; but he later dropped the plan.
- **2024: Intimidation & Harassment:** The 4-time MLA from Rajarajeshwari Nagar was arrested on charges of threatening a contractor and also on sexual harassment of a woman.

SC ADJOURNS PLEA ON BAIL TO BHAVANI

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Supreme Court on Friday adjourned for two weeks a Karnataka government plea seeking the cancellation of anticipatory bail granted to Bhavani Revanna, the mother of suspended JD(S) leader and rape accused Prajwal Revanna, in a kidnapping case involving one of the victims allegedly sexually assaulted by her son.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan asked advocate Balaji Srinivasan, appearing for Revanna, to file an affidavit giving the details of the status of the case.

Srinivasan submitted that a chargesheet has been filed in the case, other accused have been granted bail and Bhavani has cooperated with the investigation.

The bench said it would not go into the merits of the matter and asked Srinivasan to file an affidavit.

The court then adjourned the matter for two weeks.

On 10 July, the top court refused to set aside the anticipatory bail granted to Bhavani in the case and sought her response on the appeal filed by the Karnataka government challenging the Karnataka High Court order.

The SIT had sought her custody in connection with the kidnapping of a house-help in KR Nagar in Mysuru district after she failed to appear for questioning.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Bittu attacks Cong after T'gana MLA calls for 'beheading'

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu on Friday attacked Congress after its Telangana MLA purportedly called for his beheading, saying the opposition party has not changed since 1984 sikh riots. "1984 to 2024, Congress hasn't changed. They sought sikh blood then and they seek it today as well. Kharge ji Mohabbat ki Dukan?," Bittu said in his post X. A ruling Congress MLA in Telangana found himself in a row over his reported comments that he would give his property to anyone who "brings the head of" Ravneet Singh Bittu. Vedma Bojju, MLA from Khanapur (ST), who held a protest against the minister's comments on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, said he is ready to give away his land to whoever beheads Bittu. —*PTI*

TMC leader held on abduction charges, barred from party

KOLKATA, 20 SEPT

A Trinamool Congress (TMC) councillor was arrested on Friday for allegedly masterminding the abduction of a Tripura-based businessman for a ransom of Rs 2.25 crore in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district. According to a senior police official, Milan Sardar, a councillor from Barasat municipality, was apprehended a day after a CID team raided a gated apartment complex in Madhyamgram area and rescued the businessman. Barasat TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar confirmed that Sardar has been expelled from the party. "We have zero tolerance on corruption. If anyone is found guilty, the party will not stand by them," she added. In addition to Sardar, seven others were arrested in connection with the alleged crime. —*PTI*

Farmers remark row: Kangana summoned

BULANDSHAHR, 20 SEPT

An MP-MLA court here has summoned Lok Sabha member and actor Kangana Ranaut on 25 October over a case filed against her for making objectionable remarks about the 2020-21 farmers' protest, a lawyer said Friday. The complaint filed by a functionary of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Kisan Shakti) pertains to Ranaut's remarks during media interviews in which she claimed "violence", "rapes" and "murders" happened during the protest against three controversial farm laws, which were later withdrawn by the Centre. Gajendra Sharma, general secretary (organisation) of BKU (Kisan Shakti), said, "I have lodged the complaint over the indecent remarks made against farmers by Lok Sabha MP Kangna Ranaut. Even before she became an MP, she had made indecent remarks on farmers who were engaged in the protest at Ghazipur border (of Delhi)." —*PTI*

BJP MP Chavan's brother-in-law joins Congress

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

In a setback to BJP Rajya Sabha member Ashok Chavan, his brother-in-law and former MP Bhaskarrao Patil Khatgaonkar on Friday returned to the Congress fold after quitting the saffron party in Maharashtra ahead of the assembly polls. Khatgaonkar, a three-time former Lok Sabha MP from Nanded district, rejoined the Congress, where he had spent several years before switching sides, in the presence of MPCC president Nana Patole and senior leader Amit Deshmukh. The veteran politician is the brother-in-law of former chief minister Ashok Chavan, who quit the Congress and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in February this year. —*PTI*

Cong run by 'tukde' gang, Naxals: PM

In a swipe at Rahul, Modi alleges Congress insults India on foreign land

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and others in Maharashtra on Friday PHOTO: PTI

WARDHA, 20 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday lashed out at Congress, saying the "most corrupt" party was being run by the tukde tukde gang and urban Naxals.

"Congress which you see today is not the party with which a great man like Mahatma Gandhi was associated," Modi said, addressing a public meeting at Wardha in Maharashtra on completion of one year of the PM Vishwakarma scheme.

Modi also spoke of the "anti-India agendas" of the Congress leaders in their speeches abroad, without naming that party's leader Rahul Gandhi, who is facing flak from the ruling dispensation for his remark in the US on scrapping the reservation system.

"If there is a corrupt party it is the Congress and the most corrupt family is its shahi parivar. Congress used farmers only for politics and corruption, Modi said," Modi said. "Congress did not allow SCs, STs and OBCs to prosper," he added. —*PTI*

3 FIRs against RaGa in Chhasttisgarh for Sikhs remarks

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Three FIRs have been registered against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in parts of Chhattisgarh for allegedly hurting the religious sentiments of the Sikh community through his remarks made during the recent US visit, the police said on Friday.

While two cases — one at the Civil Lines police station in capital Raipur and another at the Bilaspur Civil Lines police station in Bilaspur district — were registered on Thursday, an FIR was filed at the Kotwali police station in Durg district on Friday, they said.

The cases were registered based on the complaints lodged by BJP leaders. Similar complaints have been submitted at police stations in other districts of the state, too, by ruling party leaders. —*PTI*

Shah appeals to Naxals to lay down arms

RANCHI, 20 SEPT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday appealed to Naxals to give up violence, lay down arms and surrender, saying an all-out operation will otherwise be carried out against them. Addressing 55 victims of Naxal violence from Chhattisgarh at his residence here, Shah also said that Maoists will take their last breath on March 31, 2026.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has decided that Naxal violence and ideology will be wiped out from the country.

He also arrived in Jharkhand's Deoghar and headed towards Sahibganj to flag off BJP's 'Parivartan Yatra' under which a series of rallies would be taken out in the state to oust the current JMM-led dispensation from power.

Amit Shah PHOTO: PTI

The 'Parivartan Yatra' was planned ahead of the assembly elections due later this year. Shah would visit Bhognadih, the birthplace of Sido and Kanu who led the Santhal revolt in 1855, a party leader said.

With an eye on the Assembly elections, the opposition BJP would launch six 'Parivartan' processions to reach out to the people and "expose the failures" of the JMM-led government in the state. —*PTI*

CORRUPTION CASE: HC REJECTS MALIWAL'S PLEA

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The Delhi High Court on Friday dismissed a plea by Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal challenging framing of charges against her under the anti-corruption law for allegedly abusing her official position when she was Delhi Commission for Women chief in appointing people associated with the AAP to different posts in the women's rights body. Justice Amit Mahajan refused to quash the order framing charges against Maliwal. A detailed order is awaited. On 8 December, 2022, the trial court had ordered framing of charges against Maliwal and three others under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act, including Section 13(1)(d) (criminal misconduct by a public servant). The case was lodged by the Anti-Corruption Bureau on a complaint by former DCW chairperson and BJP MLA Barkha Shukla Singh. The High Court last year stayed the trial court proceedings against Maliwal in the criminal case. —*PTI*

Kejriwal joins Haryana poll campaign, calls Modi a thief

CHANDIGARH, 20 SEPT

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Friday claimed that the next government in Haryana cannot be formed without the support of his party.

Joining AAP's campaign in Haryana, the former Delhi chief minister said people will oust BJP in the 5 October state Assembly polls. Accompanied by AAP's Haryana unit chief Sushil Gupta, Kejriwal held a road show in the Jagadhri constituency in Yamunanagar district in favour of his party candidate Adarsh Pal.

AAP is contesting the Haryana polls on its own after its talks with the Congress over a seat-share agreement broke down. "AAP is getting so many seats... I calculated after reaching here... we are getting so many seats that the next government in Haryana cannot be formed without AAP's support. In entire Haryana, the first seat which we will win is Jagadhri," said Kejriwal.

AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal during a roadshow in support of party candidate Adarsh in Haryana on Friday PHOTO: PTI

Among the 15 candidates in the fray from Jagadhri, Adarsh Pal is pitted against BJP's sitting MLA Kanwar Pal."Education mafia is flourishing in Haryana currently. Private schools are indulging in 'gundagardi' and hiking fees. In Delhi, we stopped 'gundagardi' of private schools and we improved the condition of government schools there. We will make this happen in Haryana too," he said.

Addressing the crowds during the road show in the afternoon, Kejriwal said the entire Haryana this time wants "badlaav". Hitting out at ruling BJP in the state, he said, "Wherever you go, you come to know that people don't allow them to enter villages, streets."

He alleged that corruption, unemployment, inflation and drug menace has increased under BJP rule in Haryana.

"What did BJP give you? Corruption, unemployment, inflation and drugs to your children. Nothing else," Kejriwal said. On being jailed, Kejriwal hit out at the BJP dispensation at the Centre. —*PTI*

WRITES TO MODI

Mamata threatens to sever ties with DVC

KOLKATA, 20 SEPT

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that her state would sever all ties with the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) for "unilaterally releasing water", which led to floods in south Bengal districts. In a four-page letter to Modi, she claimed that five million people in Bengal have been affected by the floods, and urged him to immediately sanction and release central funds to address the widespread devastation caused by the deluge.

Sharply retorting to her remarks, senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari "challenged" the chief minister to execute her ultimatum by the end of the day and warned that if Banerjee severed ties with the DVC, several districts in southern Bengal would plunge into darkness.

"I would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that as a result of an unprecedented, unplanned, and unilateral release of an enormously huge volume of water at nearly five lakh cusec from the combined system of Maithon and Panchet dams. If this unilateral approach continues, bringing hardship to the people of my state, we will be left with no option but to disengage entirely from DVC and withdraw our participation," she said.

Mamata Banerjee PHOTO: PTI

The flood-hit South Bengal districts include Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Bardhaman, Birbhum, Bankura, Howrah, Hooghly, Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur, she said.

On the other hand, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also on Friday slammed Banerjee and Hemant Soren saying one was "teaching lesson to people of Jharkhand by sealing its borders" while people of Bengal were suffering from floods and the other was maintaining silence as "politics was more important to him". Himanta, who is also BJP co-incharge of Jharkhand Assembly elections due later this year, is in the state to participate in BJP's 'Parivartan Rally' which will be flagged off by Union Home Minister Amit Shah from Sahibganj. —*PTI*

WB junior doctors to partially resume duties

KOLKATA, 20 SEPT

Junior doctors protesting the rape-murder of a colleague at RG Kar hospital ended their 42-day 'cease work' on Friday, announcing partial resumption of duties in essential services after a march to the CBI office following a week-long demonstration outside the state health department's headquarters.

The procession, which covered around 4 km from 'Swasthya Bhawan' to the CGO Complex, aimed to urge a swift conclusion to the CBI probe into the case. The medics said they would not work in the outpatient department (OPD) but partially function in emergency and essential services.

In yet another powerful show of solidarity, thousands of citizens gathered here on Friday evening for a massive 42-km torch rally demanding justice for the murdered young medic, coinciding with junior doctors' withdrawal of 'cease work'.

"Today, we are calling off our 'cease work.' From tomorrow, we will partially join duties concerning emergency and essential services," one said. To commemorate their struggle, junior doctors also announced the establishment of Abhaya medical camps in flood-hit regions of the state, further demonstrating their commitment to public health even amidst protests. —*PTI*

Sharad moves SC for two new symbols

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly elections, veteran leader Sharad Pawar led faction moved the Supreme Court on Friday seeking that both factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) be given new poll symbols.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan listed the plea for hearing on September 25 after senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Sharad faction submitted that they want urgent listing of the matter in view of the assembly elections in Maharashtra.

Singhvi said that till the matter is finally decided, both the groups should be given new symbols ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly elections. Sharad has moved the apex court against the February 6 order of the Election Commission recognising Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar-led group as the real Nationalist Congress Party.

The Election Commission (EC) has also allotted the NCP symbol 'clock' to the group led by Ajit Pawar. The NCP, founded by Sharad Pawar, had 'clock' as its election symbol before its split. —*PTI*

Personal asst of Manipur minister abducted

IMPHAL, 20 SEPT

Unknown men abducted the personal assistant of Manipur Consumer Affairs Minister L Susindro near his residence in Imphal East district on Friday, police said.

The motive behind the abduction of S. Somorendro (43) remains unclear. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident and investigations are ongoing, police said.

This comes a day after armed assailants fired at least five rounds at the residence of former chief secretary Oinam Nabakishore in Bishnupur district on Thursday night. Nobody was injured in the incident, police said.

L Susindro PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

Police recovered empty cartridge cases from the spot and a case has been registered at Bishnupur police station.

There is a possibility of militant attack: Security advisor

Manipur security advisor Kuldiep Singh on Friday said security forces have taken a number of steps in the wake of reports that militants might carry out violence in peripheral villages.

Addressing a press conference, Singh said reports of movement of these militants have been circulating for the past three to four days.

He indicated that the attacks could occur any day around September 28 and said "the government thought it prudent that the efforts being taken to counter any such attacks must be shared."

He mentioned that planned measures have been communicated to remote areas to ensure that any militant movements are "nipped in the bud," with intelligence shared among various agencies. —*PTI*

US SAYS IT SEES INDIA AS LEADER WITHIN QUAD

WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

The US sees India as a leader within the Quad and is grateful for New Delhi's role in the four-nation grouping, a top White House official has said.

The remarks by Mira Rapp-Hooper, White House National Security Council Senior Director for East Asia and Oceania, came two days ahead of the Quad summit, comprising leaders from Australia, India, Japan and US. The best encapsulation of the way the US thinks about India's role is captured in US's Indo-Pacific strategy, she added. —*PTI*

PAWAN WANTS SEPARATE BOARD

TN dairy firm says not guilty in laddu row

AMARAVATI, 20 SEPT

AR Dairy Food Private Limited – which is at the centre of a storm over allegations that ghee supplied by it to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) to prepare Tirupati laddoos contained animal fat – has denied allegations of adulteration.

Representatives of the Dindigul-headquartered company, which has now been blacklisted, told reporters that the company supplied ghee to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, the organisation that manages the Lord Balaji Temple, in June and July but stopped the supply thereafter.

Even when ghee was supplied to Tirupati temple, it was sent along with duly accredited lab reports.

Pawan Kalyan PHOTO: PTI

Meanwhile, Pawan Kalyan, Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh called for the formation of a 'Sanatana Dharma Rakshana Board'.

Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) termed the incident as "intolerable" and demanded that the Andhra Pradesh government hand over the control and management of the temple to the Hindu society.

VHP Secretary General Bajrang Bagda also pitched for "freeing" all temples and other Hindu religious places from government control across the country, as he demanded legal action against those allegedly involved in desecrating Tirupati laddu prasadam.

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar requested Naidu to take necessary measures to alleviate concerns among the public about Tirupati laddu.

The former chief priest of Lord Venkateswara temple, Ramana Deekshitulu, claimed he had taken the quality-related deficiencies to the notice of the Executive Officer and TTD Board chairman but in vain.

He urged Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to take corrective measures to address the situation.

Congress said if claims of "desecration" of the Tirupati laddu are right, a full-fledged inquiry must identify the guilty, but if they are wrong or motivated, millions of Tirupati devotees will not forgive those playing with their faith. —*PTI*

'Suggestion in 1 nation, 1 election report flawed'

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

With the government setting the ball rolling for simultaneous polls, former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi has flagged concerns over the practicality and implications of the proposed move, saying some key recommendations are "flawed" as he emphasised the need for a debate in Parliament on these issues.

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday accepted the recommendations of a high-level committee headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind for holding simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha, state Assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner after a countrywide consensus-building exercise.

The move has sparked a national debate with opposition parties calling it impractical and a "cheap stunt" by the ruling BJP.

The report on "One Nation One Election" claimed that more than 80 per cent of the 21,558 responses received supported the proposal.

Quraishi termed several key recommendations in the report "flawed". He pointed out that the simultaneous elections would exclude Panchayat elections, which represent a substantial number of local elected officials.

The report suggested that Panchayat elections will take place separately within a 100-day timeframe. This is a move that the former CEC said contradicts the very essence of simultaneous elections.

"Conducting separate elections just months apart will create significant logistical challenges and voter fatigue," he warned. —*PTI*

6-year-old girl found dead in Gujarat govt school

DAHOD, 20 SEPT

A six-year-old girl was found dead on the campus of a government-run primary school in a village in Gujarat's Dahod district, police said on Friday. The Class 1 student was found in the compound of the primary school in Torani village of Singvad taluka on Thursday night by her parents and relatives, Deputy Superintendent of Police JD Kansara said. "When the girl did not return home after school, her parents and relatives started searching for her and arrived at the school at night. They found her unconscious in the compound behind the school building," he said. "We have registered a case of accidental death, the official said. Talking to reporters, a relative of the deceased girl said the school gate was locked, and they had to jump over the compound wall. The child was found unconscious behind the school building. *—PTI*

Angry over birth of 4th daughter, man kills infant in UP

ETAWAH, 20 SEPT

In a fit of rage over the birth of a fourth daughter when he had hoped for a son, a 30-year-old man killed the newborn by slamming her to the ground in a village here, police said on Friday. Bablu Diwakar has been arrested, they said. Police said Diwakar had two daughters with his first wife, who died. He remarried and the first child with his second wife was also a daughter. The couple's second child, Diwakar's fourth daughter, was born last month, the SSP added. During an argument with his parents on Sunday, an inebriated Diwakar snatched the one-month-old girl from his wife's lap and flung her to the ground, police said. The infant was rushed to a hospital with severe injuries where she died on Wednesday, they added. *—PTI*

'The Night Manager' scores Emmy nomination

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The Indian version of 'The Night Manager', starring Anil Kapoor, Aditya Roy Kapoor and Sobhita Dhulipala, has received a nomination in the drama series category at the 2024 International Emmy Awards. 'The Night Manager' is the only entry from India across 14 categories at the nominations that were announced on Thursday. The series, directed by Sandeep Modi and Priyanka Ghose, is adapted from both—the John le Carre's novel and the British show, starring Tom Hiddleston, Hugh Laurie and Olivia Colman. 'The Night Manager' will compete with French show 'Les Gouttes de Dieu', 'The Newsreader - Season 2" from Australia and "Iosi, El Espia Arrepentido" season two from Argentina in the category. *—PTI*

Odisha forester kills self, family alleges mental torture

BHUBANESWAR, 20 SEPT

A forester's body was found hanging in his official quarter at Bhawanipatna in Odisha's Kalahandi district, an official said. The deceased forest official was Sanjay Kumar Nayak, a resident of Rayagada district and he was posted at Bhawanipatna. The deceased's wife Priyanka Subudhi alleged that her husband was forced to commit suicide due to mental torture meted out to him by his higher authority. The deceased's brother also levelled similar allegations against the higher authority of Nayak and demanded action against the concerned forest officer. *—PTI*

SC raps govt over delay in appointing judges

SC directs govt to produce chart on each name reiterated by Collegium for judicial appointment

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre to provide information about the numbers and names reiterated by the apex court Collegium for appointment as judges in higher judiciary with reasons why they were not considered so far and at what level they were pending.

The direction was passed by a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud while hearing a PIL seeking a direction that a time limit be fixed for the Centre to notify the appointment of judges recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium.

"The Supreme Court Collegium is not a search committee (for judges) whose recommendations can be stalled," said the bench which also comprised Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

The bench asked Attorney General (AG) R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, to provide it with a list of names reiterated by the Collegium and say "why they are pending and at what level".

The PIL was filed by advocate Harsh Vibhore Singhal *PHOTO: PTI*

The PIL was filed by advocate Harsh Vibhore Singhal.

The plea has also sought a direction to plug the 'zone of twilight' of there being no time for notifying the Collegium's recommendations for the appointment of judges to the higher judiciary.

The plea said that in the absence of a fixed period, "the government arbitrarily delays notifying appointments thereby trampling upon judicial independence, imperilling the constitutional and democratic order and disparaging the majesty and sagacity of the court".

Lawyer Prashant Bhushan referred to the name of senior advocate Saurabh Kirpal, who has not been appointed as a High Court judge despite reiteration by the apex court Collegium. *—PTI*

SC junks SpiceJet's plea over debt issue

Supreme Court on Friday upheld an order of Delhi High Court which directed low-cost airline SpiceJet to ground three aircraft engines for defaulting on payments to lessors.A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra dismissed the appeal filed by SpiceJet against the High Court verdict of 11 September.

SC stays NGT's ₹1K cr fine on Punjab

Supreme Court stayed the 25 July order of National Green Tribunal, which had imposed over Rs 1,000 crore as environmental compensation on Punjab for failing to manage legacy waste and untreated sewage in the state. The bench issued notice to the Centre and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the appeal filed by the state government against the NGT order.

SC asks panel to submit measures on coaching centres

Supreme Court on Friday directed a Union government-appointed high-level committee probing the death of three IAS aspirants in a coaching centre here in July due to flooding in the building's basement to submit interim measures in four weeks to prevent such incidents.A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan directed the Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi governments to apprise the court of policy, legislative and administrative changes made to prevent a repeat of such incidents.

WB VIOLENCE CASE: SC PULLS UP CBI FOR DOUBTING COURT

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Supreme Court on Friday rapped CBI for making "scandalous allegations" against the courts in its plea seeking transfer of cases relating to the 2021 post-post violence cases outside West Bengal.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Pankaj Mithal said the agency cannot cast aspersions on the entire judiciary in West Bengal.

"Your officers may not like the judicial officer or a particular state but don't say that the entire judiciary is not functioning. The judges the district judges and civil judges and sessions judges can't come here and defend themselves," the bench told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the CBI. *—PTI*

U'khand Guv gives nod to Bill making protesters pay for property damage

DEHRADUN, 20 SEPT

Uttarakhand Governor Lt Gen (Retd) Gurmit Singh has given his assent to a legislation that would enable full recovery of damages caused to public property during riots or protests as well as the imposition of a fine of up to Rs 8 lakh on rioters.

The Uttarakhand Public and Private Property Damage Recovery Bill was passed by the state assembly last month and sent to the governor for his nod, which was received on Thursday.

Welcoming the governor's assent, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Friday said the law's strict provisions would serve as a strong deterrent for potential offenders who damaged public property during strikes, protest demonstrations or riots.

Apart from full recovery of damage caused to private and government property from rioters, a fine of up to Rs 8 lakh will also be imposed upon them and they will also be made to pay for the expenses of the government staff on riot control measures, officials had earlier said.

They later said the law would be the country's "toughest" anti-riot legislation.

The law was first introduced in the form of an ordinance in March after massive damage caused to public property during the riots in the Banbhoolpura area of Haldwani the previous month.

The rioters set a police station on fire and torched a number of vehicles parked outside it.

The riots, which broke out over the demolition of a madrasa and a place of worship allegedly built on encroached land, had claimed six lives besides leaving a number of police personnel and journalists injured. *—PTI*

HC seeks govt's stand on quota for statehood

Uttarakhand High Court has sought a reply from the state government on a PIL challenging the constitutionality of an Act granting 10 per cent reservation to those who participated in the movement for statehood and their dependents in government jobs. The legislation passed by the state Assembly granting 10 per cent reservation to statehood agitators and their dependents in government jobs became an act in August this year.

CRAZE FOR APPLE

Customers queue up outside Apple stores in India ahead of the highly anticipated launch of the iPhone 16 series on Friday. Customers waited up to 21 hours to be the first to enter the Apple stores. Enthusiasts from across the country travelled to Mumbai and Delhi, as these cities are home to the only Apple stores *PHOTO: X*

First-ever future warfare course to begin on 23 Sept

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Chief of Defence Staff General **Anil Chauhan** has said a first-ever futu re warfare course, which will be attended by the officers of different ranks, is slated to start on 23 September.

In an interaction session at the Bharat Shakti Defence Conclave here on Thursday, he also spoke of the broader contours of the planned joint theatre commands envisioned by the government.

He was asked about the takeaways from a recent conference of commanders from the three Services.

"We also discussed how warfare is evolving and what we need to do about it, and that I think is a important. In that we discussed something like a future warfare course, which is going to start after four days, on 23rd (September), the first-ever course, which we are curating it," the Chief of Defence Staff said.

It's slightly different from a regular course, where the officers of similar rank attend a course, he said.

PHOTO: PTI

"This is rank-agnostic, and you will see officers from the rank of a Major to a Major General attending this particular course. So, it's breaking barrier. It's something new that we are trying to do," he added.

So, a major general may probably learn something from a major and a major can learn strategy and operations from a major general, he said.

It's inaugural course and maybe it will "mature in future", the CDS said. *—PTI*

10 MEN ACCUSED

J'khand girl gangraped on way back from school

KHUNTI/MATHURA, 20 SEPT

A 16-year-old tribal girl was allegedly gangraped when she was returning home from her school in Jharkhand's Khunti district, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred on Wednesday near National Highway 75, connecting Ranchi with Chaibasa, in the Murhu Police Station area, a senior officer said.

"An FIR has been lodged on Thursday and persons involved in the crime are being identified. They will soon be arrested. She had undergone a medical test," Khunti Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Varun Rajak told PTI.

The girl, in her statement to the police, said that around 10 men dragged her to roadside bushes when she was returning home from school on Wednesday afternoon and five of them raped her.

PHOTO: PTI

Dalit girl gangraped in moving car

A 13-year-old Dalit girl was allegedly gangraped by three people here in a moving car, after which she was thrown out on the side of a road, police said on Friday. An FIR has been lodged against the accused.

The incident took place on Thursday when the minor went to a shop to buy items for breakfast.

At the shop, a man named Neeraj allegedly gave her a bottle of water laced with sedatives and kidnapped her. *—PTI*

Case filed over sexual assault of woman by Odisha cops

BHUBANESWAR, 20 SEPT

Crime Branch of the Odisha Police on Friday registered a case in the alleged sexual assault of an army officer's fiancé in police custody, a senior officer said.

The case was registered against former Bharatpur Police Station inspector-in-charge Dinakrushna Mishra, sub-inspectors Baisalini Panda, Salilamayee Sahoo, Sagarika Rath and constable Balaram Hansda.

Notably, the Odisha Police had on Wednesday suspended the five personnel in the alleged assault of an army officer and "molestation" of his fiancé at Bharatpur Police Station in Bhubaneswar.

The army officer posted in West Bengal and his fiancé had approached Bharatpur Police Station early on Sunday to lodge a complaint of road rage in which they were allegedly harassed by some localS.

At the police station, the duo got engaged in a quarrel with the personnel over the registration of an FIR.

The woman, who was arrested in Bhubaneswar for allegedly misbehaving with the police, claimed that she was sexually harassed after being taken into custody.

She was on Thursday released on bail granted by the high court.

The woman, who is at present undergoing treatment at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, said, "I don't know what happened, they put him in the lockup. When I raised the voice that they cannot put an Army officer in custody as it is unlawful, two female officers started physically assaulting me," she alleged on Thursday.

The police personnel then put her in a room after tying her hands and legs, she alleged.

"After some time, a male officer opened the doors and kicked on my breasts several times. He lowered down my pants and his as well. Showing his private part, he asked me how much time you want to remain silent," the woman alleged. *—PTI*

AFTER WORKER'S DEATH

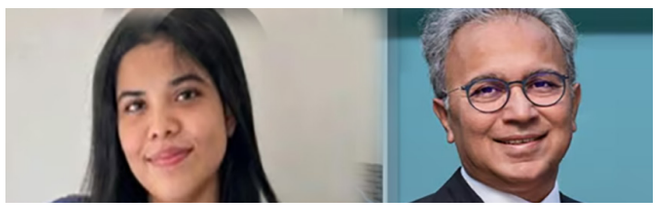
Will not rest till harmonious workplace achieved: EY head

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

EY India chairman Rajiv Memani has expressed regret at not attending the funeral of a 26-year-old employee whose death was blamed on stress by her mother, and said he will not rest till achieving the goal of harmonious workplace.

Anna Sebastian Perayil, who passed her CA exams in 2023 and worked at EY Pune office for four months, died in July. According to a letter her mother wrote to Memani, she was overworked with a "back-breaking" load as a new employee that affected her "physically, emotionally, and mentally".

The government too has stepped in to say that it will investigate the work environment at Big Four accounting firm EY.



Anna Sebastian Perayil and EY India Chairman Rajiv Memani *PHOTO: PTI*

In a post on LinkedIn, Memani said he was "deeply saddened" by the death and as a father, can only imagine the grief of the family.

"I have conveyed my deepest condolences to the family, although nothing can fill the void in their lives," he wrote. "I truly regret the fact that we missed being present at Anna's funeral. This is completely alien to our culture. It has never happened before; it will never happen again."

Deloitte forms panel to review people practices

Deloitte has formed a three-member external committee, which includes former revenue secretary Tarun Bajaj, to look into practices, policies and processes concerning employees, its South Asia CEO Romal Shetty said on Friday. *—PTI*

'NEET accused solved paper in centres'

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The principal and vice principal of the Oasis School in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, allegedly conspired with others to steal the NEET-UG 2024 question paper, the CBI has alleged in its second chargesheet in the paper leak case that also names four others.

Officials said on Friday the chargesheet, naming Principal Ahsanul Haque, Vice Principal Mohd Imtiyaz Alam and four others, was filed before a special court in Patna.

In its report filed on Thursday, the CBI also named Aman Kumar Singh, Baldev Kumar, Sunny Kumar and a local journalist Jamaluddin. They were charged under Section 120-B (criminal conspiracy), Section 109 (abetment), Section 409 (criminal breach of trust), Section 420 (cheating), Section 380 (theft), Section 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), and Section 411 (dishonestly receiving stolen property).

NEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses *PHOTO: PTI*

In its report filed on Thursday, the CBI also named Aman Kumar Singh, Baldev Kumar, Sunny Kumar

Additionally, the central probe agency levelled provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act against Haque and Alam.

Haque was appointed city coordinator for Hazaribagh and Alam was designated the centre superintendent by National Testing Agency for conducting conduct of NEET UG-2024 examination.

The CBI alleged that Pankaj Kumar, one of the alleged masterminds, acted in connivance with Haque and Alam.

The trunks containing the NEET UG 2024 question papers were brought to the school and kept in the control room in the morning of 5 May.

Haque and Alam allowed Kumar to access the room where the trunks were kept, the CBI has alleged.

According to the CBI, the paper was solved at Hazaribagh on the morning of 5 May by a set of solvers studying in MBBS courses at AIIMS Patna, RIMS Ranchi and a Medical College in Bharatpur. *—PTI*

TAJ MAHAL IS WASTING AWAY

Plant growth on the marble wall of the Taj Mahal's central dome has sparked concerns about the monument's upkeep after a tourist shared a photo on social media. The plant, sprouting between marble stones on the northern side of the dome, comes days after rainwater seeped through the ivory-white marble structure, resulting in droplets reaching the tomb below

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Indian-American vote to play a huge role in US polls

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the US Congress in June 2023, he made a point of referring to Vice President Kamala Harris and her Indian heritage.

"There are millions here who have roots in India. Some of them proudly sit in this chamber and there is one right behind me, who has made history," he said, pointing at Harris, seated behind him on the dais.

"I am told that the Samosa Caucus is now the flavor of the House," Modi joked, referring to the handful of Indian American lawmakers who had adopted the savory Indian pastry as part of their caucus nickname. Harris' mother was born in India, and her father in Jamaica.

Between Modi's most recent visit and his upcoming trip this weekend, Harris has continued to make history by becoming the first Indian American to run for the highest office in the country.

In November, US voters will decide between her and former President Donald Trump.

Karthick Ramakrishnan of AAPI Data, an organization studying the political attitudes of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, said Harris' heritage is a sign that Indian Americans are a growing political force.

Following in the footsteps of Dalip Singh Saund, the very first Indian American elected to Congress in 1957, there are now five Indian Americans in Congress and nearly 40 in state legislatures. Voters themselves have the highest voting rates of any Asian American group, according to AAPI Data's numbers.

Coming to America with knowledge of democracy

"It is very remarkable how quickly the Indian American community has grown in terms of its political engagement and civic leadership," Ramakrishnan told DW.

"What I found in my research, and other studies have found as well, is that coming from a democratic country means that you're more likely to be civically engaged than if you come from an authoritarian.

President Donald Trump with Prime Minister Narendra Modi ***PHOTO: PTI***

In other words, Ramakrishnan said, having experience in terms of competitive elections or competitive party systems in an ancestral homeland goes a long way toward political engagement in the adoptive country.

And being a relatively wealthy and highly educated voter group helps that engagement as well, as politically-minded Indian Americans are able to access resources and fundraise from within the community.

"What you're seeing now is a virtuous circle in which people are starting to run for office. They're getting political donations from their friends, their social networks, but even communities across the country who are excited and proud of their candidacy," he said.

According to data from the Pew Research Center, Indian Americans have a largely positive view of India, with 76 per cent seeing it favorably, including 51 per cent who see it very favorably. However, around two-thirds of the participants said they would not move there.

And with the organizers reporting some 25,000 registered to attend Modi's speech on Long Island, New York on Sunday — far surpassing the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum capacity of 16,000 seats — it would appear Indian Americans are interested in Indian politics.

But this interest may not necessarily translate into any kind of voting impact in the US.

"Prime Minister Modi is extremely popular with Hindu Indian Americans in particular. But his influence is limited," said Irfan Nooruddin, professor of Indian politics at Georgetown University, pointing to similar mega-events such as the "Howdy Modi" community summit in Houston, Texas in 2019, where former President Donald Trump appeared with Modi in front of 50,000 Indian Americans. This week, Trump has announced he was due to meet Modi during the upcoming visit, but that has yet to be confirmed.

"So clearly Trump was trying to build on his relationship with Modi to win favor with Indian American voters. Yet polls tell us that the Indian American community votes overwhelmingly for Democratic candidates," said Nooruddin.

Incidentally — in Republican quarters, it's often repeated that Indian Americans vote Democrat out of preference for the name, not policy.

"The reason they vote Democratic is because India is a democracy," said Hima Kolanagireddy, a Republican national committeewoman from Michigan, who was born in India.

"When they come here and they see Democratic Party, they equate democracy to Democratic Party. They think maybe this is the party that we should be voting for."

Is Trump or Harris better for Modi?

Close ties with Trump notwithstanding, it's not easy to tell whom Modi himself would urge Indian Americans to support, were he able to do so publicly.

"Trump, whose anti-trade, anti-globalization, and anti-immigrant rhetoric is unlikely to be good news for India should he return to power," he added.

While impossible to know for sure, Nooruddin said he would bet on Modi leaning toward Harris.

"I would think that, all in all, he'd prefer a continuation of the Biden-Harris administration and the relative stability it promises even if it would require building a relationship to Harris, rather than return to the unpredictability of a Trump administration, even if that might allow him to have more of a pass on domestic politics," he said.

In that regard, Modi might be on the same page as a majority of Indian Americans — in wanting to see the first Indian American woman take the US presidency. —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Voters split on Harris vs Trump over economy

Going into November's election, neither Kamala Harris nor Donald Trump has a decisive edge with the public on the economy, turning an issue that was once a clear strength for Trump into the equivalent of a political jump ball.

About 4 in 10 registered voters say Republican Trump would do a better job handling the economy, while a similar number say that about the Democratic vice president, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. About 1 in 10 voters don't trust either candidate, and a similar share has equal faith in them.

The finding is a warning sign for Trump, who has tried to link Harris to President Joe Biden's economic track record. The new poll suggests that Harris may be escaping some of the president's baggage on the issue, undercutting what was previously one of Trump's major advantages.

The economy has long been a weak issue for Biden: A separate AP-NORC poll conducted in late June, before Biden's disastrous debate with Trump, found that about 6 in 10 Americans disapproved of his handling of the economy. Earlier this year, Americans were much more likely to say that Trump's presidency helped the country on cost of living and job creation, compared to Biden's.

The new poll found that the economy is one of the most important issues for about 8 in 10 voters as they consider which candidate to support, dwarfing other top issues like health care and crime.

The aftermath of inflation's spike in 2022 to a four-decade high has pervaded this year's presidential contest. Shoppers are upset over their grocery bills. Higher interest rates are financially squeezing the buyers of homes and motor vehicles. All that has appeared to matter more to the public than the low 4.2 per cent unemployment rate and stock market gains.

According to the AP-NORC poll, only about one-third of voters say the state of the national economy is somewhat or very good, although they're more optimistic about their own situation, with about 6 in 10 voters saying their household's finances are somewhat or very good. Both of those numbers have remained steady over the course of the year, despite falling inflation.

The candidates have clashing ideas about how best to straighten out the economy, giving voters a stark choice that might hint at how partisan identity increasingly informs views of the economy and policy. But neither campaign has fully explained how its plans would be implemented. Harris insists her plans would be fully funded and not add to the deficit, while Trump's team assumes — in defiance of most economic models — that growth will be high enough to offset the cost.

Mark Carlough, 33, who works on medical records in Philadelphia, plans to vote for Harris and says he believes that the taxes on imports proposed by Trump would hurt most consumers.

"The tariffs would be horrible for the economy," he said.

Richard Tunnell, 32, of Huntsville, Texas, plans to vote for Trump, just as he did in 2020. He's not sure if the Republican has an advantage over Harris on the economy, but he noted that Trump has been a great businessman who remains one of the "richest men on the planet" even after filing for bankruptcy multiple times.

Chantelle Breaux, 38, a stay-at-home parent from Lafayette, Louisiana, feels neither candidate has much to offer on the economy. She doesn't plan to vote — unless a candidate more to her liking enters the race.

"Kamala wants to put a Band-Aid where major surgery needs to be done on this economy," said Breaux. "Trump wants to run the country as if it's a business, but it isn't a business that is going to support all of the people."

Former President Trump suggests growth would come from tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy leading to more investment, while a universal tariff of as much as 20% would direct that investment to building U.S. factories.

Harris has campaigned on more benefits for the middle class to be funded by higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy, saying that would help to contain costs and deliver growth. Her team has warned that Trump's tariffs would lead to higher prices and worsen underlying inflation challenges.

Trump and Harris are evenly matched in the poll on who would better handle crime and the war in Gaza. But the issues soon splinter in ways that reflect the distinct priorities of Republicans and Democrats.

Trump has an advantage over Harris on whom voters trust to better handle immigration. This issue was a problem for Biden, as well: Illegal immigration and crossings at the U.S. border with Mexico have been a challenge during much of his administration. Republicans are more likely to care about immigration, the issue where Trump has a clear upper hand. —*PTI*

About 4 in 10 registered voters say Republican Trump would do a better job handling the economy, while a similar number say that about the Democratic Vice President ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

'Labour chowks' deserted as workers choose 'paid crowds' at poll rallies

Every morning construction workers gather at these designated spots from where they are hired as daily wagers. These site are found empty usually ahead of festivals when the labourers leave for their hometown or when there is a ban on construction activities to check pollution ***PHOTO: ANI***

- Voting for the 90-member assembly in Haryana will take place on 5 October while the votes will be counted on 8 October

The 'labour chowks' in the millennium city bear a deserted look these days, not because there is a festival around or there is a ban on construction activities. But because they have found a better alterative: attending political rallies.

Every morning construction workers gather at these designated spots from where they are hired as daily wagers. These site are found empty usually ahead of festivals when the labourers leave for their hometown or when there is a ban on construction activities to check pollution.

However, with the campaigning for 5 October assembly polls in Haryana gaining momentum these labourers are much in demand to become "paid crowds" at political rallies.

"Most parties and candidates require crowds at their rallies. The job is less taxing for us and we get paid mostly the same amount -- Rs 800 to Rs 1,000 for each rally, which is what we get paid after a day-long of hardwork. So, I and my family do not go to the chowk these days," Sundar, a Bihar labourer who has been living in Gurugram for eight years, told PTI.

Sundar, who is not a registered voter here, says either the representatives from political parties reach out to their labour union leaders or the labourers directly go to the candidates' offices.

His wife, who works as a domestic help, also joins him these days for rallies.

"For her, it is difficult to get leaves but even if the houses she is working for, deduct money for leaves, we get paid better and there is free food to go with that," he added.

Mohan, who shifted his voter registration to Gurugram last year from Balia in Uttar Pradesh, said, construction work is seasonal.

"The work is also low these days due to rains. October and November are Diwali and Chatth months so labourers go on long leaves to their hometowns. Pollution also leaves us out of work during winters. So, I attend these rallies, sometimes of different parties too. This is the first time I will be voting in Gurugram," he added.

A district level worker for a political party confirmed reaching out to labourers for mega rallies.

"When some big leader is coming from the central leadership, the attendance has to be strong for a show of strength. We do our networking on ground to get maximum people to attend the rallies but we have to use some ways to show crowd too," he said on condition of anonymity.

According to Binny Singhla, a taxi operator in Gulha Cheeka village on the Punjab-Haryana border, there is always demand for paid crowd in political rallies.

"For bigger rallies in anywhere in Haryana, taxi operators are approached to provide cars as well as people for attending the rally. There is no compulsion on them who should they vote for, they are paid on daily wage basis. For local rallies, parties pick up people from mandis or labour chowks," he told PTI.

"Usually, these people move in groups. So that parties or groups do not reach out to them individually but for like 50-100 people together," he said.

Voting for the 90-member assembly in Haryana will take place on October 5 while the votes will be counted on 8 October. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Taiwan issues alert over Chinese wax candy sold online

TAIPEI, 20 SEPT

Taiwan has expressed concern over wax candies imported from China and sold online in the country, local media reported. As per a report in Taiwan News, the country's Health Ministry on Tuesday stated that the product known as "wax bottle candy" from China has gained popularity and is available on various online shopping platforms in Taiwan. However, many of these items lack proper ingredient labels and necessary permits. Deputy Health Minister Lin Ching-yi stated that consuming these candies could pose health risks, and selling them without proper approval is illegal, Taiwan News reported. The Ministry has urged consumers to prioritise their health and safety by being vigilant about the products they choose, especially those sourced from questionable suppliers. ***—ANI***

Climate change in Austria may impact storms and floods

VIENNA, 20 SEPT

Experts have warned about the impact of climate change on storms and floods, linking the recent heavy rainfall in Austria and other European countries to global warming. They noted that such extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and intense, cautioning that more severe consequences could follow. Climate research consistently shows that heavy rainfall has significantly increased across many continental regions, particularly in Europe. The recent extreme weather conditions in Austria highlight the urgent need for climate adaptation measures, alongside stronger climate protection policies. Austria has faced repeated thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, and floods, coinciding with record-breaking heatwaves during the summer. ***—ANI***

In UK's first, kirtan recognised as 'Sikh Sacred Music'

LONDON, 20 SEPT

For the first time in the UK, kirtan is recognised as part of the graded music examination system, with students able to access a formal curriculum and texts for "Sikh Sacred Music" starting Friday. Birmingham-based musician and academic Harjinder Lallie has devoted years towards kirtan taking its rightful place alongside Western classical music and ensuring the traditional musical skills are preserved for generations to come. Kirtan, the singing of shabads or scriptures from the holy 'Guru Granth Sahib', is a fundamental method of devotion and praise in the Sikh faith.***—PTI***

Pak faces $100B loan repayment in four years

ISLAMABAD, 20 SEPT

Cash-strapped Pakistan is facing a daunting task of repaying a staggering USD 100 billion external debt over the next four years, the government has said, an amount which is nearly 10 times its current USD 9.4 billion foreign exchange reserves. The USD 100 billion external debt repayments from 2024 to 2027 are exclusive of any payments on account of the liabilities booked at the balance sheet of the central bank and the requirements for financing the current account deficit, according to a report published in The Express Tribune newspaper on Friday. "Pakistan's external debt repayments for four years are USD 100 billion," Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik said on Thursday. However, "the debt stock can easily be financed through rollovers or replacement of the existing debt with new one," Malik was quoted as saying by the newspaper. ***—PTI***

Ahead of election today, Lanka still waits for change

Election officials work at a polling material distribution centre ahead of the upcoming presidential election, in Sri Lanka on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

COLOMBO, 20 SEPT

Two years ago, tens of thousands of Sri Lankans rose up against their president and forced him to flee the country. As the country prepares for its first election since then, many say they're still waiting for change.

As Sri Lanka sank into economic collapse in 2022, people from various walks of life rallied to change a long-entrenched government they saw as responsible. The unprecedented island-wide public uprising they led was a moment of hope for the country long been fatigued by war and economic instability.

Days ahead of Saturday's presidential election, many still complain of corrupt leaders, economic mismanagement, and the entrenched power of the political old guard, but former protesters are having a hard time coming together behind a candidate.

They agree on one thing: Sri Lanka needs a new political system that can take it out of economic and political turbulence.

Days after Rajapaksa fled the country, Sri Lanka's parliament replaced him with then-prime minister Ranil Wickremensignhe in a vote that many protesters saw as a victory for the status quo.

Many Sri Lankans say the current government is largely made up of the same politicians who have ruled the island nation for decades through a devastating civil war that ended in 2009 to the economic crisis that began during the coronavirus pandemic.

The worst of the economic crisis is over, he says, but there's still a long road ahead. "We wanted to create a new party, a new political culture, and emerging leaders, but we could not do that," said Kerner, who joined the protests in their first days and helped to start the "Go Home, Gota" slogan that became a rallying cry for Rajapaksa's foes. Meanwhile, many of the protest movement's political demands remain unmet, from accountability from his predecessors for the economic crisis, to curtailment of president's powers and a democratic replacement. *—AP*

Hezbollah hits Northern Israel with 140 rockets

US warplanes, ships ready in Middle East if conflict expands

TEL AVIV, WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

Israel's north came under heavy fire after Hezbollah launched some 130 hundred rockets in barrages targeting the Galilee and Golan Heights in the early afternoon hours on Saturday. The attack caused damage and several brush fires to ignited.

Lebanon's Hezbollah-affiliated al-Manar channel, said the strike was in response to Israel's "false claims" that it struck some 1,000 rocket launchers in Lebanon since Friday. The outlet said the rockets were aimed at Israeli military bases.

Israel also warned US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin in a call Tuesday that a military operation was going to take place in Lebanon but gave no details, US officials said Thursday. The same day of the call, in an attack widely blamed on Israel, thousands of pagers belonging to Hezbollah militants exploded.

The call was one of four between Austin and Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant this week as attacks have spiked between Israel and Hezbollah, fuelling worries that they could escalate into a wider regional war.

Israeli soldiers allegedly push bodies off a rooftop in the West Bank on Friday. However, IDF said they are investigating the incident ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

The two spoke again later Tuesday, and the US has acknowledged being briefed following the attack. There was another call Wednesday, and they also spoke Sunday, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private talks.

The officials said the US did not get advance warning of the second wave of attacks, with walkie-talkie radios targeted Wednesday. At least 37 people were killed, including two children, and some 3,000 wounded in the two days of explosions.

The US has kept an increased military presence in the Middle East throughout much of the past year, with about 40,000 forces, at least a dozen warships and four Air Force fighter jet squadrons spread across the region both to protect allies and to serve as a deterrent against attacks, several US officials said.

As attacks between Israel and Hezbollah sharply spiked this week, worries are growing that the conflict could escalate into an all-out war, even as Tel Aviv keeps up its nearly yearlong fight against Hamas militants in Gaza.

Components used for pagers not from Taiwan:, minister

Components used in thousands of pagers that detonated on Tuesday in Lebanon in a deadly blow to Hezbollah were not made in Taiwan, Taiwan's economy minister has said.

Taiwan-based Gold Apollo said this week it did not manufacture the devices used in the attack, and that Budapest-based company BAC to which the pagers were traced has a licence to use its brand.

—AP, Al Jazeera

AHEAD OF WINTER

EU to loan Ukraine $39B for rebuilding damaged power grid

KYIV, 20 SEPT

The European Union pledged on Friday to lend Ukraine up to 35 billion euros ($39 billion) as part of a loan package organized by the Group of Seven major industrial nations, as it seeks to help the country rebuild its economy and its war-shattered power grid.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday focused on helping the country to repair and reconnect its war-damaged electricity grid and boost its heating capacity as winter approaches.

Around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed during its war with Russia, and rolling electricity blackouts leave parts of the east in darkness for four hours at a time. Von der Leyden said it was as though all of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia had lost electricity. The main aim is to help Ukraine decentralise its power grid, and to become less reliant on the big power stations that make easier targets for Russian forces. Around 260 missiles rained down in a major attack on energy infrastructure late last month.

EU President Ursula von der with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

On Thursday, the commission announced that it would provide an extra $180 million to help fortify Ukraine's energy network. Of that, $112 million come from the windfall profits the EU has earned from interest on frozen Russian assets. The Europeans have already sent more 10,000 generators and transformers, and they're supplying small and more mobile gas turbines too.

—AP

An official source said a clearance operation is underway to neutralise the threat ***PHOTO: DAILYEXCELSIOR***

12 security personnel killed in Pak terror attack

PESHAWAR, 20 SEP

Twelve security forces personnel were killed and 11 others injured in a terror attack on a security check post in the intervening night of Thursday and Friday in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, officials said.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack. According to officials, a group of militants attacked the security check post in Mishta village at Ladha tehsil in South Waziristan district resulting in the death of six security forces personnel and injury to 11 others.

An official source said a clearance operation is underway to neutralise the threat. The attack comes amidst rising tensions in the region. The TTP has been active in the area, with several similar attacks targeting security forces. The Pakistani government has repeatedly accused the TTP of operating from sanctuaries in Afghanistan, a claim denied by the Afghan Taliban.

There has been an uptick in the incidents of terrorism in Pakistan since the Taliban took over the government in Kabul in 2021, dashing hopes in Islamabad that a friendly government in Afghanistan would help to tackle militancy. Relations between the two countries have lately become strained, largely because of the TTP but also due to frequent border skirmishes.

The TTP was set up as an umbrella group of several militant outfits in 2007. *—PTI*

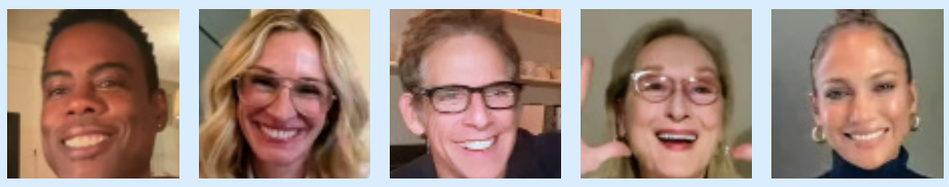
Trump vows to be 'best friend' to Jewish Americans

WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

Former President Donald Trump on Thursday decried antisemitism hours after an explosive CNN report detailed how one of his allies running for North Carolina governor made a series of racial and sexual comments on a website where he also referred to himself as a "black NAZI."

North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson vowed to remain in the race despite the report, and the Trump campaign appeared to be distancing itself from the candidate while still calling the battleground state a vital part to winning back the White House. Trump has frequently voiced his support for Robinson, who has been considered a rising star in his party despite a history of inflammatory remarks about race and abortion.

Trump did not comment on the allegations during his Thursday addresses to a group of Jewish donors and to the Israeli-American Council in Washington. His campaign issued a statement about the CNN story that did not mention Robinson, saying instead that Trump "is focused on winning the White House and saving this country" and that North Carolina was a "vital part of that plan." Robinson's reported remarks - including a 2012 comment in which he said he preferred Adolf Hitler to the leadership in Washington - clashed with Trump's denunciations of antisemitism in Washington and his claim that Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, sympathized with enemies of Israel. *—AP*



Chris Rock, Julia Roberts, Ben Stiller, Meryl Streep and Jennifer Lopez ***PHOTO: X***

Kamala, Oprah host star-studded rally

Kamala Harris sat down with Oprah Winfrey on Thursday for a "virtual rally" that included a wide-ranging sit-down interview, during which Harris attacked her opponent's stance on reproductive rights and pledged to sign a border security bill thwarted by Senate Republicans, but largely kept her guard up with the legendary television interviewer.

Brazil's coffee belt grapples with dry heat threat

CACONDE, 20 SEPT

Silvio Almeida's coffee plantation sits at an ideal altitude on a Brazilian hillside, whose clay-rich soil does well at retaining moisture from rainfall and a nearby reservoir.

Lately, though, water is scarce on Almeida's modest farm in Caconde, a town in one of Sao Paulo state's key growing regions. He can't get his coffee to grow the way it should.

In Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, Almeida and other farmers have started grappling with the nation's worst drought in more than seven decades and above-average temperatures. Almeida expected to harvest 120 sacks of coffee beans this harvest season, but instead managed just 100. "Given the conditions here, the 2025 crop is already affected," he told The Associated Press, pointing to a part of his plantation where flower buds died before blooming. "I won't say it's doomed, because with God anything is possible. But based on the situation, it's already compromised." At the same time, Vietnam, the world's second-biggest coffee producer, is experiencing heat and drought, affecting its crops. *—AP*

140 TIMES BIGGER THAN EARTH

Astronomers detect biggest black hole jets ever seen

SYDNEY, 20 SEPT

The largest known black hole jets, 23 million light years across, have been discovered in the distant universe. This pair of particle beams launched by a supermassive black hole is over a hundred times larger than our galaxy, the Milky Way.

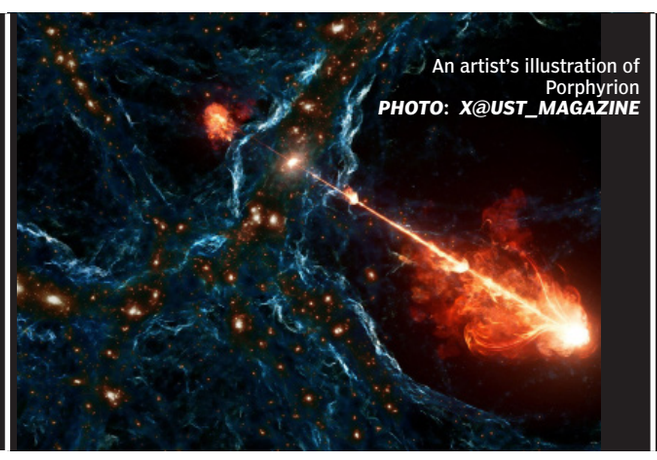
In 2022, we announced the discovery of one of the largest black hole jets in the night sky, launched from a (relatively) nearby galaxy called NGC2663. Using CSIRO's Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) in Western Australia, we confirmed that NGC2663's jet is one of the largest in the sky. In other words, it appears to be the largest when viewed from Earth.

The new jet, announced in the journal Nature, has been dubbed "Porphyrion" by its discoverers at the California Institute of Technology in the United States. It dwarfs NGC2663's jet in actual size and is over 20 times larger – a true colossus.

Porphyrion can tell us more about the great ecosystem of matter flowing inside and outside of galaxies. But this jet also has us scratching our heads: how can something 23 million light years across be almost perfectly straight?

WHAT IS BLACK HOLE JET?

A black hole jet, nicknamed Porphyrion, is a supermassive black hole. The size of the black hole is equivalent to lining up **140** milky way galaxies. It is spanning **23 million** light-years in total length. **Discovered by**: Martijn Oei, a postdoctoral scholar at Caltech, and his team of astronomers



An artist's illustration of Porphyrion ***PHOTO: X@UST_MAGAZINE***

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE?

- It is the largest known black hole.
- It is over a hundred times larger than our galaxy (Milky Way).
- These fierce outflows have a total power output equivalent to trillions of suns.
- It has travelled for about 7 billion years to arrive on Earth.
- It can tell us more about the great ecosystem of matter flowing inside and outside of galaxies.

Seeing invisible light

Porphyrion was discovered by astronomers using the International LOFAR Telescope, a network of radio sensors centred in the Netherlands, and stretching from Sweden to Bulgaria, and from Ireland to Latvia. Radio telescopes like ASKAP and LOFAR can see light that is invisible to our eyes: radio waves.

As matter is pulled towards the black hole, various fates await. Some matter is eaten entirely. Some orbits around the black hole, forming a disk. And some of it becomes twisted and tangled in intense magnetic fields, until it is released into two opposing jets, blasting at almost the speed of light. Porphyrion, by contrast, seems to have been happily powering its way through the cosmos for about 2 billion years, unperturbed.

—The Conversation

PHOTO: PTI

Gold rallies at ₹ 700 to ₹ 76,350 per 10g

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Gold prices rallied Rs 700 to Rs 76,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid a rise in precious metal rates globally. On Thursday, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 75,650 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver remained flat at Rs 91,000 per kilogram. Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose for the third straight session, climbing Rs 700 to Rs 76,000 per 10 grams on Friday, according to All India Sarafa Association. It had ended at Rs 75,300 per 10 grams in the previous close. On the other hand, gold contracts jumped Rs 341 or 0.46 per cent to Rs 73,779 per 10 grams in trade on Multi Commodity Exchange. —*PTI*

Rupee logs 10P gain to settle at 83.55 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

The rupee stayed on the upward track for a record seventh straight session and settled 10 paise higher at 83.55 (provisional) against the dollar on Friday, as robust domestic equity markets and retreating crude oil prices boosted investors' sentiment. Forex traders said a weak greenback against Asian peers supported the Indian currency. They attributed the lower dollar index to investors' shifting focus towards emerging market currencies after the US Federal Reserve reduced benchmark interest rate by 0.50 per cent. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the Indian currency opened at 83.63 and hit the intraday high of 83.48 against the greenback. The unit touched the day's low of 83.63 before settling at 83.55 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 10 paise from its previous close. —*PTI*

Blinkit, BigBasket and Zepto deliver iPhone 16 in mins

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Hilarious memes and jokes flooded social media as quick commerce platforms such as Blinkit, Zepto, and BigBasket delivered iPhones within minutes to customers on Friday. As the iPhone 16 series made its debut in India today, pictures of people queuing up outside Apple stores in Mumbai and Delhi surfaced. But much to the delight of iPhone fans, Blinkit announced that it will deliver iPhone 16 in 10 minutes, owing to its partnership with Unicorn Stores, an authorised Apple reseller. Zepto joined the race, as did BigBasket, which is known for grocery deliveries. As a result of this, residents of Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru can now get the latest iPhones instantly. On X, social media users expressed their opinions on this aspect with the help of memes that will make you laugh out loud. —PTI

BharatPe fraud: Grover's brother in-law arrested

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Delhi Police Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has arrested a family member of BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover in connection with the alleged misappropriation of funds with the fintech company, police officials said on Friday. Deepak Gupta, who is a brother-in-law of Grover, was arrested on Friday, they said. Gupta was named in the FIR which was registered against Grover, his wife Madhuri Jain and their family member in May 2023 in the Rs 81-crore fraud case, an officer said, adding that Gupta is being interrogated. Gupta's arrest is the second arrest in this case so far, officials said. BharatPe has accused Grover and his family of causing losses to the firm to the tune of about Rs 81.3 crore. —*PTI*

RBI may go for rate cut in Feb 2025, says SBI research

Average inflation is expected to be at 4.6-4.7 per cent

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

In light of the recent 50 basis points (bps) rate cut by the US Federal Reserve, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may consider a similar move but not this year, potentially announcing a rate cut by February 2025, according to a report by SBI Research.

The report highlighted that India's consumer price index (CPI) inflation has eased to a near five-year low of 3.65 per cent year-on-year in August 2024.

"As such, we don't anticipate any rate action by RBI in calendar 2024. An early 2025 rate cut (February) looks the best bet as of now. We still believe that liquidity challenges will remain for the banking sector with government cash balances progressively moving out of the banking system," said the report.

Despite expected spikes in inflation in September and October, as per the report, the CPI inflation is projected to remain below or close to 5 per cent in the coming months. For the full financial year 2024-25, average inflation is expected to be in the range of 4.6 per cent to 4.7 per cent, staying within the RBI's target range of 4-6 per cent.

In terms of monetary policy, according to the report, the RBI has continued to maintain tight liquidity to manage inflationary pressures. Government surplus cash balances averaged Rs 2.8 lakh crore, while the durable/core liquidity surplus increased to Rs 3.19 lakh crore as of September 18, with an average of Rs 3.9 lakh crore since the last monetary policy announcement. —*PTI*

The report highlighted that India's consumer price index (CPI) inflation has eased to a near five-year low of 3.65 per cent PHOTO: PTI

RBI: Food price volatility remains contingent risk

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

Food price volatility remains a contingent risk even as the overall retail inflation has remained below the target of 4 per cent for the second consecutive month in August, said the latest Bulletin of the Reserve Bank released on Friday.

The September Bulletin also said that global economic activity is slowing down while the pace of disinflation remains sluggish, provoking caution among monetary policy authorities.

"Consumer price index inflation came in below the Reserve Bank's target for the second consecutive month in August, although in light of experience, food price volatility a contingent risk." —*PTI*

POST GUIDANCE CUT

European shares slip as Mercedes drops down to 8%

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Mercedes shares fell more than 8 per cent on Friday after becoming the latest carmaker to cut its guidance this year as sluggish demand in China and trade disputes weigh on the sector.

The company said late Thursday that it now expects group earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) to come in "significantly below" the previous year and that its adjusted return on sales would be between 7.5 per cent and 8.5 per cent, down from its earlier forecast of 10 per cent to 11per cent .

Mercedes' revision was triggered by a "further deterioration of the macroeconomic environment," primarily driven by weaker Chinese consumption and a prolonged downturn in the country's real estate sector, the firm said in its Thursday statement.

"This affected the overall sales volume in China including sales in the Top-End segment.

PHOTO: ANI

Overall, the sales mix in the second half of 2024 is expected to remain unchanged versus the first half, and therefore weaker than originally expected," the company said

Meanwhile, shares of the debt-ridden telecom major Vodafone Idea have nosedived 24 per cent in the last two days, slipping below the Rs 10 mark today to a low of Rs 9.79 on the BSE as disappointment over the AGR case continues. —*Agencies*

India: Not an abuser of tariffs, Trump unfair

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Former US President Donald Trump's recent claim that India is an "abuser" of import tariffs is unfair as many nations including America protect their domestic industries by imposing high customs duties on certain products, think tank GTRI said on Friday.

It said that according to WTO's World Tariff Profiles 2023, the US also imposes high duties on items like dairy products (188 per cent), Fruits and vegetables (132 per cent), Coffee, tea, cocoa and spices (53 per cent), Cereals and food preparations (193 per cent), Oilseeds, fats and oils (164 per cent), beverages and tobacco (150 per cent), Fish and fish products (35 per cent), Minerals and metals (187 per cent), and Chemicals (56 per cent).

While India does impose high tariffs on certain items, including wines and automobiles, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) argued that these figures do not represent the overall tariff landscape.

On 17 September, Trump called India an "abuser" of import tariffs, a claim that echoed his October 2020 statement labelling India the "Tariff King".

India's average tariff rate of 17 per cent is higher than the US's 3.3 per cent, but similar to other major economies like South Korea (13.4 per cent) and China (7.5 per cent).

It also said that India has demonstrated its openness to free trade by removing customs duties for imports from FTA partners such as ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), Japan, and South Korea. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- India's average tariff rate of 17 per cent is higher than the US's 3.3 per cent, but similar to other major economies like South Korea (13.4 per cent)

PhysicsWallah raises $210M; valuation at $2.8B

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Edtech unicorn PhysicsWallah said on Friday it has raised USD 210 million in a funding round led by Hornbill Capital at a 2.5 times higher valuation of USD 2.8 billion.

Lightspeed Venture Partners, along with existing investors GSV and WestBridge, also participated in the funding round.

"PhysicsWallah Pvt Ltd (PW) has closed its series B funding round, raising USD 210 million. This investment brings the company's post-money valuation to an impressive USD 2.8 billion, 2.5x (times) jump over its last valuation of USD 1.1 billion," the company said in a statement.

There has been a long dry spell of significant funding in the Indian edtech sector with a significant dip in the valuation of large edtech firms. The funding is expected to bolster PW cash reserves to support its future growth plans, it said.

The company plans to utilise the fresh funds to strategically scale operations, with a key focus on consolidation in the education market.

PhysicsWallah claims to produce 9,500 hours of educational content every week with a student base across 18,808 pin codes, accounting for almost 98 per cent of pin codes in India. —*PTI*

PhysicsWallah claims to produce 9,500 hours of educational content every week with students across 18,808 pin codes PHOTO: @PHYSCISWALLAH

GOVT MAY EXTEND IMPORT RULE FOR LAPTOPS, TABLETS

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The government is expected to extend the existing import management system for imports of certain IT hardware products including laptops and tablets for three months, an official source said.

The deadline for review of the system is 30 September.

The official said that these imports stood at USD 8.4 billion in 2023-24 against the authorisation of about USD 9.5 billion. Most of these imports were coming from China.

In October last year, the government rolled out an import management/ authorisation for imports of laptops, personal computers and certain other IT hardware products. The system is aimed at monitoring inbound shipments of these items into the country without hurting market supply.

On 1 November 1, 2023, the government cleared over 100 applications, including those of Apple, Dell and Lenovo, which sought permission for imports of these IT hardware products worth nearly USD 10 billion, on the first day of implementation of the new system. —*PTI*

MINORITY STAKE CASE

NCLT rejects Philips plea over valuation difference

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

National Company Law Tribunal has dismissed the petition by Philips India to buy out the remaining 3.87 per cent from its minority shareholders, observing a "huge difference" between values determined by the company-appointed valuer and its minority investors.

The Kolkata bench of NCLT though agreed with the "discounted cash flow method" adopted by the valuers appointed by Philips India and its minority shareholders but pointed out a "huge difference" between the price of the share determined by them.

"While petitioner (Philips India) appointed valuer has valued it at Rs 740 per share, the respondent (minority shareholders) appointed valuer has valued in excess of Rs 4,500, by suggesting a range between Rs 4,605 to Rs 6,119," it said.

The tribunal suggested that the situation may require a direction to the registered valuer to disclose the parameters factored while determining the price under the discounted cash flow method to reconcile two vastly different prices determined by two different Registered Valuers. —*PTI*

PHOTO: @PHILIPS.INDIA

GOYAL TO REVIEW INDIA AND ASEAN TRADE PACT

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The progress of talks for the review of the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in goods will figure during the visit of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to Laos, an official statement said on Friday.

The two-day visit of Goyal to Vientiane, Laos, started from Friday.

He is there to participate in the 21st ASEAN-India Economic Ministers (AEM-India) meeting and the 12th East Asia Summit Economic Ministers Meeting (EAS EMM).

These annual meetings of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) with their dialogue partners are being hosted by Laos, the ASEAN Chair for this year.

It added that Goyal will have a number of bilateral meetings with his counterparts from participating countries on the sidelines of two institutional meetings.

Meetings have been scheduled with the minister of the host country Laos and visiting ministers from Korea, Malaysia, Switzerland and Myanmar.

The next round of talks for ongoing review meeting will be held in November. —*PTI*

Retail inflation for farm workers eases to 5.96%

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers eased to 5.96 per cent and 6.08 per cent, respectively, in August against the comparative figures of 6.17 per cent and 6.20 per cent recorded in July this year.

The All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) registered an increase of 7 points each in August 2024, reaching levels of 1297 and 1309, respectively.

The CPI-AL and CPI-RL were 1290 points and 1302 points, respectively, in July.

"The year-on-year inflation rates based on CPI-AL and CPI–RL for this month (August 2024) were recorded at 5.96 per cent and 6.08 per cent, compared to 7.37 per cent and 7.12 per cent in August, 2023. The corresponding figures for July, 2024 were 6.17 per cent for CPI-AL and 6.20 per cent for CPI-RL," a labour ministry statement said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

'SERIOUS THREAT'

Jewels sector vulnerable to laundering: FATF

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The ease with which the trade of precious metals and stones can be used to move "large amounts" of funds without leaving an ownership trail shows this sector in India is vulnerable to be used as a tool for money laundering and terrorist financing, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) said.

The Paris-headquartered global body said in its mutual evaluation report for India released on Thursday that the money laundering (ML) risks associated with the "smuggling and dealing" in precious metals and stones should be "further developed" given the size of this sector in the country.

The report said there were approximately 1,75,000 DPMS (dealers of precious metals and stones) in the country but its apex body-- Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) only had 9,500 members.

Certificate of being a GJEPC member along with tax registration is mandatory for undertaking import or export of gems trade in India.

It recommended that India should include "deeper" qualitative and quantitative data and typologies from domestic and international sources on the money laundering risks associated with precious metals and stones smuggled into and circulating in India, when undertaking future risk assessments on DPMS and gold and diamond smuggling and the associated money laundering risks.

The FATF said similar action was required to deal with human trafficking cases.

A more detailed action plan that provides more "granular" mitigation measures, which lays out clear priorities and benchmarks. India is currently the world's second largest consumer of gold, the largest importer, and largest exporter of gold jewellery. —*PTI*

India is currently the world's second largest consumer of gold, the largest importer, and largest exporter of gold jewellery PHOTO: FREEPIK

Govt notifies 1 October for Vivad Se Vishwas 2.0

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The government has notified October 1 as the starting date for direct tax dispute resolution scheme Vivad Se Vishwas 2.0.

Vivad Se Vishwas scheme 2.0 was originally announced in Budget 2024-25 presented in July for resolution of certain income tax disputes pending appeal.

"The central government hereby appoints the 1st day of October, 2024 as the date on which the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme, 2024 shall come into force," the finance ministry said in a notification.

Around 2.7 crore direct tax demands totalling about Rs 35 lakh crore are being disputed at various legal foras.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech had said that the government will continue its efforts to simplify taxes, improve taxpayer services, provide tax certainty and reduce litigation while enhancing revenues.

It would also include cases pending before Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP) and revision petitions pending before the Commissioner of Income Tax. The first 'Vivad se Vishwas' scheme for cases under the direct taxes was brought out by the government in 2020. —*PTI*

Nirmala Sitharaman PHOTO: PTI

Rajasthan Royals appoint Rathour as batting coach

JAIPUR, 20 SEPT

Rajasthan Royals on Friday announced the appointment of former India opener Vikram Rathour as their batting coach ahead of the IPL 2025. Rathour, 55, is the second high-profile appointment by the franchise for the upcoming season after they roped in Rahul Dravid as their chief coach. Rathour served as India's batting coach in the set-up under Dravid as they guided Rohit Sharma and Co to victory in the T20 World Cup earlier this year. "Rathour, a seasoned cricket professional, joins the Royals' coaching setup shortly after the franchise welcomed Rahul Dravid back as head coach," Rajasthan Royals said in a statement. "It will reignite a successful partnership that elevated India to the top of the rankings in all three formats during their stint together, and led the country to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 title earlier this year."—*PTI*

Shuttler Malvika loses to Yamaguchi in China Open

CHANGZHOU, 20 SEP

Talented Indian shuttler Malvika Bansod could not stand up to the challenge of two-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi, going down to the fourth-seeded Japanese in straight games in the quarterfinals of the China Open here on Friday. Malvika, ranked 43rd, found the going tough against the world No.5 losing 10-21, 16-21 in just 35 minutes as India's challenge in the Super 1000 tournament came to an end. The loss comes just a day after the 22-year-old Malvika had defeated two-time Commonwealth Games medallist and world No. 25 from Scotland Kristy Gilmour in a round-of-16 clash. This was the third successive loss for Malvika against Yamaguchi, the former world No. 1. The Nagpur shuttler was no match for Yamaguchi in the opening game as the Japanese took a massive eight-point lead at 12-4 before closing out the game at 21-10. —*PTI*

PHOTO: TWITTER

Dhanush wins bronze at Jr World C'ships

LEON, 20 SEPT

Indian lifter Loganathan Dhanush on Friday claimed the bronze medal in the 55 kg weight category at the IWF Junior World Weightlifting Championships here. This achievement marks the first-ever medal for an Indian male athlete in the Junior weightlifting World Championships. The 17-year-old lifted a total of 231 kg, also securing a bronze in the snatch event with 107 kg. Interestingly, Dhanush competed in Group B, and sat through the group A session. —*PTI*

Golfers Ridhima & Tvesa tied 17th at La Sella Open

DENIA, 20 SEPT

Indian golfers Ridhima Dilawari and Tvesa Malik were tied 17th at 2-under 70 each at the end of the first round of the La Sella Open on the Ladies European Tour. The other two Indians, Pranavi Urs (even par 72) and Seher Atwal,73, were placed T-31 and T-63 respectively. Ridhima, who finished late on Thursday evening, had a bogey start and then had three birdies against two bogeys in an action-filled five-hole stretch between the eighth and the 12th. At even par through 16, she birdied her last two holes for a solid 2-under card. Tvesa teed off from the 10th and had a steady back-nine with eight pars and a birdie on the par-4 15th. Pranavi had three birdies and three bogeys in her 72.—*PTI*

Day 2: Pacers put India on top

India lead by 308 runs; Bumrah takes 4 wickets

GEORGETOWN, 22 AUG

Indian players celebrate after taking a wicket of Bangladesh player at the end of the second day of the first test cricket match between India and Bangladesh, at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, Friday PHOTO: BCCI

Jasprit Bumrah's artistry seemed incomprehensible for an out of sorts Bangladesh batting line-up as India took complete control of the opening Test with an overall lead of 308 runs at end of second day's play.

Bumraj (4/50) once again worked his magic in company of Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep (2/19) and Ravindra Jadeja as Bangladesh were all-out for a paltry 149 in their first innings in reply to India's 376. With a lead of 227 runs, India ended second at 81 for 3 with Shubman Gill (33 batting) and Rishabh Pant (12 batting) at the crease.

The rest of the six Bangladesh wickets were equally shared by rookie Akash Deep (2/19), seasoned Ravindra Jadeja (2/19) and Mohammed Siraj (2/30). However, the beginning of India's second innings was not really bright as they lost skipper Rohit Sharma (5) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (10) with 28 on board.

Rohit was forced to play a slightly short of the length delivery from Taskin Ahmed, and the resultant edge ended with Zakir Hasan at gully. Jaiswal was guilty of succumbing to the temptation of going for an expansive drive after pacer Nahid Rana pitched one full following up on a few short-pitched deliveries. But the 28 for two was not really alarming considering the substantial first innings lead India had amassed by then. However, they needed immediate consolidation to further tighten the grip. Gill provided that in the company of Virat Kohli (17, 37 balls) for the third wicket while adding 39 runs.

Gill played some delectable shots either side of the pitch, generating immense power and timing from his typical minimum-follow through of the bat method. A short-arm jab through covers off Rana for boundary was the standout shot from the right-hander on the day. But the Kohli's dismissal, leg before to spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz, late on the day slightly soured the proceedings for India.

That indecisiveness was the hallmark of the rest of the Bangladesh innings, as Bumrah added the wickets of Mushfiqur Rahim, Taskin and Hasan Mahmud to his collection.

Centurion Ravichandran Ashwin endured a rare wicketless innings but others stepped in for him, and Bangladesh too contributed with their timorous approach.

The quick slipped into his elements straightway and fetched India the first breakthrough dismissing in-form Shadman Islam, who shouldered arms to an in-cutter with disastrous consequences. It was a dismissal where Bumrah set up Shadman with a few deliveries round the wicket (for the southpaw) and then came over the wicket to keep the length intact but subtly changing the line of attack.

Pacer Akash chipped in with two wickets in as many balls to oust Zakir and Mominul Haq which hastened Bangladesh's downfall.

Before they collapsed in a heap, Bangladesh had a few moments of delight as they managed to price out the last four Indian wickets, including Ashwin (113) and Jadeja (86), to put a quick end to the hosts' first dig.

Ashwin and Jadeja departed after adding 199 runs, which came off 240 balls and 189 minutes, across three sessions. Taskin (3/55) bowled better lines and returned with the wickets of Ashwin, Jadeja and Akash. Fellow pacer Hasan Mahmud added a fifth wicket to his kitty in the form of Bumrah to bring curtains to the Indian innings. It was Mahmud's second successive fifer after bagging one against Pakistan at Rawalpindi earlier this month. —*PTI*

45TH CHESS OLYMPIAD

D Gukesh during the his game in Budapest, on Friday PHOTO: X/@FIDE

Indian men beat Iran to inch closer to gold

BUDAPEST, 20 SEPT

The Indian men's team scored yet another thumping 3.5-0.5 points victory over Iran to stake claim for the gold medal in the Open section but the women suffered a shock 1.5-2.5 points defeat at the hands of Poland in the eighth round of the 45th Chess Olympiad currently underway here.

With their eighth victory in as many matches, the Indian men took their tally to 16 points and stretched their lead to a massive two points over nearest rivals Hungary and Uzbekistan with just three rounds left in the biggest chess event on the planet.

World number four Arjun Erigaisi started the rampage with black pieces and crashed through the defences of Bardiya Daneshvar who proved no match for the Indian. World Championship challenger D Gukesh then put it across Parham Maghsoodloo with black pieces, swindling the Iranian towards the end of the first time-control.

For Arjun, this was another step towards the 2800-rating mark as he took his personal tally to a remarkable 7.5 points from eight games. In live ratings, Arjun is now at 2793 points, and if he does cross the 2800 mark, he will be the 16th player in history -- and only the second Indian after Viswanathan Anand -- to do so.

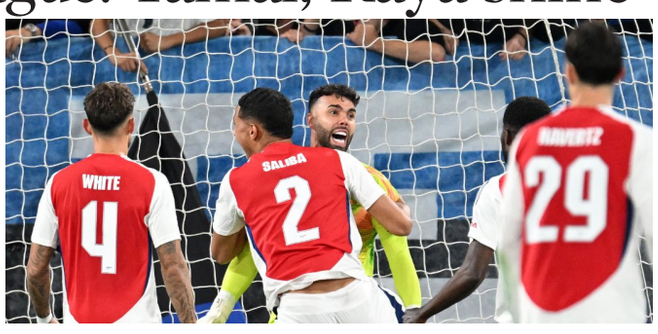
Taking a cue from Arjun, Gukesh made sure he kept closing in, and his victory took him to 2785 rating points. This is the first time ever that there are two Indians in top-five of the world rankings. Arjun created early complications again, going for the reverse Benoni with his black pieces. Daneshvar fell for some tactical tricks in the middle game and could not recover.

Gukesh also won with black and it was another Queen pawn game wherein the Indian chose to play the Dubov variation in the Tarrasch defense.

Maghsoodloo went for some unwarranted complications and was caught off-guard as the clock ticked away in the middle game. Soon, the Iranian parted with a piece for a handful of pawns but fell prey to an easy tactical stroke that ended the game. —*PTI*

C'pions League: Yamal, Raya shine

PARIS, 20 SEPT



David Raya reacts after saving a goal PHOTO: X/@ARSENAL

Shortly after lighting up the European Championship, two of the world's most exciting young players shone on club soccer's biggest stage.

With mixed fortunes, however. Teenager Lamine Yamal's goal couldn't prevent 10-man Barcelona from falling to a 2-1 defeat at Monaco on Thursday in the Champions League — ending the Spanish club's perfect start to the season.

Meanwhile, it took Florian Wirtz less than five minutes to score his first Champions League goal on his debut in Europe's elite club competition.

Wirtz also netted another as Bayer Leverkusen romped to a 4-0 win at Feyenoord. "I was really looking forward to this game for the last few days already, and that's how I approached the game too. I think, however, it was like that for everyone," Wirtz said.

"I didn't count on finishing with two goals, but I had two chances and I just used them both. And then you can just build on that and I can just try to take my chances in every game."

Raya comes to the rescue for Arsenal

Atalanta, the team that beat Leverkusen four months ago, had a penalty saved in a 0-0 draw with Arsenal at home.

David Raya came to Arsenal's rescue with a double save at a penalty in the 51st minute after Thomas Partey tripped Ederson. Mateo Retegui's spot kick was saved by the Spain international but the ball came back out to the striker, whose header was clawed off the line by a scrambling Raya.

Arsenal struggled in attack with the injured Martin Odegaard, its biggest creative force, and relied on its typically obdurate defense — and Raya — to preserve a point in Bergamo. In the next round, Arsenal hosts Paris Saint-Germain. —*AP*

RYDER CUP

LIV golfers still set to play

NEW YORK, 20 SEPT

PHOTO: X/ @LIVGOLF_LEAGUE

US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau or any other American playing for LIV Golf is eligible for the Ryder Cup because the Saudi-funded tour is now included among nine tours that get PGA of America membership.

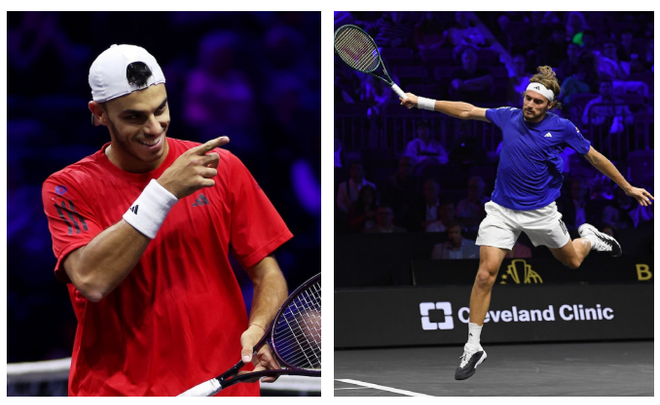
Kerry Haigh, the interim CEO of the PGA of America, said Thursday their participation in the 2025 matches or beyond was never seriously in doubt. The organization wanted clarity after recent stories speculating on players' eligibility. The PGA of America has 25 membership classes, and A-3 membership is for tour professionals around the world.

"Part of the clean-up was those (LIV) events didn't count toward A-3 membership," Haigh said. "As we have with nine other tours, the PGA of America gives credit toward playing the tournaments." He said without those credits, players would need to take part in such things as educational activities that no other tour players are required to do. The PGA of America simply added LIV to its list of tours whose players can have A-3 membership.

They still have to pay annual dues, which Haigh said was $120 a year.

The PGA of America statement said, "To ensure the PGA Championship will continue to deliver the strongest field in golf and that the US Ryder Cup team will continue to have access to the best American players, the PGA of America board has determined that LIV Golf players will be eligible for both." —*AP*

LAVER CUP



Francisco Cerundolo gets Team World off to a winning start at the Laver Cup with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Team Europe's Casper Ruud on Friday; Tsitsipas gets Europe on the scoreboard with a 6-1 6-4 victory over Thanasi Kokkinakis of Australia PHOTO:X/@LAVERCUP

Every save in Olympics was for team: Sreejesh

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Retired hockey legend PR Sreejesh PHOTO: PTI

Retired hockey legend PR Sreejesh manned the Indian goal like a wall and made some crucial saves during the country's bronze-winning campaign at the recent Paris Olympics and he said each one of his efforts was made for the entire team and the nation.

The 36-year-old Sreejesh, who retired from the game after a glorious 18-year international career, was nominated for the prestigious FIH Men's Goalkeeper of the Year Award 2024 after playing a pivotal role in India's campaign in the Olympics.

"Every save I made in that tournament was not just about me; it was about the entire team and our country's support," Sreejesh said.

"Being nominated for this award is a reflection of our collective spirit and the incredible journey we've had together. I hope my career inspires future generations to chase their dreams on the hockey field."

The nomination is the latest in a series of accolades for the legendary goalkeeper, often referred to as the 'Great Wall of Indian Hockey.'

"It's a special recognition for me, especially as I conclude my journey in international hockey," said the affable player from Kerala in a Hockey India release.

His 18-year-long career has seen him representing India in more than 300 matches and at four Olympic Games -- London 2012, Rio 2016, Tokyo 2020, and Paris 2024. —*PTI*

SINGAPORE GRAND PRIX

McLaren, Norris to put pressure on Red Bull

SINGAPORE, 20 SEPT

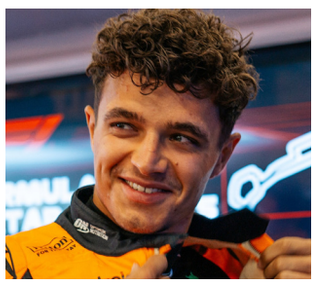


PHOTO: X/@MCLARENF1

McLaren is ahead of Red Bull in the Formula 1 constructors' race. Now for Lando Norris to put pressure on Max Verstappen for the drivers' title.

Oscar Piastri's win last week at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix put McLaren top in the teams' standings — the key to F1's lavish prize money — but teammate Norris only took a small bite out of Verstappen's lead.

After starting 15th, Norris passed Verstappen late in the race to finish fourth, but the Dutch driver still leads by 59 points heading into the Singapore Grand Prix.

Oscar Piastri is at 25 points, Charles Leclerc at 18 points, George Russell at 15 points, Lando Norris at 13 points and Max Verstappen at 10 points.

F1 looks wide open right now with Ferrari and Mercedes both fighting for wins. McLaren will still have to battle hard even if Red Bull isn't on the pace at a track where Verstappen has never won.

Piastri is the on-form driver in recent races, but in only his second season, he's heading into a late-season swing of tracks like Singapore that he doesn't know well.

Red Bull's bumpy ride

Singapore was the only track where Red Bull didn't win last year. The team couldn't find a competitive setup and Verstappen was far off the pace all weekend as Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr. took the victory.

Red Bull left Azerbaijan with some optimism that it's fixed at least some of the balance problems introduced by its attempts to upgrade the car this season. Verstappen — now without a win in seven races — wasn't happy with the car in Baku but emphasized it was a mistaken setup choice, not the underlying performance. The heat and humidity of Singapore's street circuit make it one of the toughest races of the year for drivers. —*PTI*

Lanka lead by 202 runs with 6 wkts remaining

GALLE, 20 SEPT

Sri Lanka's record of four wins in four tests against New Zealand in Galle was in mild jeopardy Friday when the Kiwis took a 35-run lead after the first innings of the first test. In reply at lunch Friday, Sri Lanka was 32 for one on the third day, trailing New Zealand by three runs with nine wickets in hand.

Left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya, who was erratic with his line and length on Day 2, found some rhythm Friday and finished with four wickets.

Sri Lanka had a half-hour to negotiate before lunch and the hosts lost Pathum Nissanka in that period when he was superbly caught in the slips by Tim Southee as William O'Rourke claimed his sixth wicket in the match.

Meanwhile, New Zealand all-rounder Glenn Phillips completed 3,000 runs in international cricket.

In the match, during the first inning, Phillips played a fine cameo of 49* in just 48 balls, with two fours and five big sixes. His runs came at a strike rate of over 102.

New Zealand had a warm-up test last week against Afghanistan in India washed out after five days without a ball being bowled. —*PTI*